



# POWERS THAT PREY

BY  
JOSIAH FLYNT  
AND  
FRANCIS WALTON

YB 07683

LIBRARY  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA.

*Class*

When reading this book be  
careful to allow for a large percent  
of "poetic license"





# The Powers that Prey

.



# *The* Powers That Prey

by

Josiah Flynt *psend*  
*Willard.*  
" and

Francis Walton *psend. for*  
*Alfred Hodder*



*New York*

McClure, Phillips & Co.

1900

HY 6233  
.W5

## GENERAL

COPYRIGHT, 1900,  
By MCCLURE, PHILLIPS & CO.

---

FIRST IMPRESSION, OCTOBER, 1900.  
SECOND IMPRESSION, NOVEMBER, 1900.

## CONTENTS.

---

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION, . . . . .	v
IN THE MATTER OF HIS NIBS, . . . . .	i
A BILL FROM TIFFANY'S, . . . . .	27
THE REVENGE OF THE FOUR, . . . . .	56
THE ORDER OF THE PENITENTS, . . . . .	85
THE PRISON DEMON, . . . . .	111
THE GREAT IDEA, . . . . .	136
FOUND GUILTY, . . . . .	167
ON SENTENCE DAY, . . . . .	189
PEGGIE NIVEN, . . . . .	209
A DEAD ONE, . . . . .	242







## INTRODUCTION.

---

Criminologists have thought it more important to photograph the outcast's facial angle than to see the outcast and his world as he himself sees them. Having determined from the start that the outcast is an inferior, they have looked for stigmata of degeneration in him and have found what they looked for. They would have found stigmata of degeneration in any other body of men whom they had examined with a like pertinacity and preconception; they have found them indeed in practically all of the men of light and leading known in history. Men of science and romanticists have used the outcast as a point of departure for the esthetic imagination and have taken it for granted that he is not so interesting as they can fancy him. They have constructed for themselves two stock characters—a simplified human brute, an epitome of the stigmata of degeneration, half-witted, cunning, sullen, furious; and an abstract mathematical detective who sees the hu-

## Introduction

man world as a magnified chessboard and solves problems in check and checkmate.

It may with great safety be said that both these stock characters belong to the realm of intellectual opera bouffe. People in the Under World differ more in their circumstances than in their psychology from people in the Upper. In both worlds there is a majority disposed rather to bear the ills they have than to fly to others that they know not of; and in both there is a minority to whom the ordinary lot of their class is simply intolerable. In the Upper World this minority become the "plungers" in the business, social, and political spheres; the *entrepreneurs*, who assume great risks on the chance of great returns, and are reckless of disaster whether to others or themselves. In the Under World this minority become the gambler, the thief, and the harlot. In both worlds the minority want honor and power in their own world, and in both they obtain their success by a combination of enterprise, intelligence, unscrupulousness, diligence, and sheer, rude power of will. The unscrupulousness in the Upper World may consist only in a bold stand against public opinion to gain an advantage, or in the violation in case

## Introduction

of need of the conventions of a class; but it must be remembered that the Under World has its conventions as well as the Upper, and that a levy of blackmail is regarded in the side-streets with the mixture of indignation and admiring approval with which a ruthless manipulation of stocks or a particularly audacious stroke in politics is regarded in "society." If Huxley is right in his contention that there is a "fixed order of things which sends social disorganization upon the track of immorality as surely as it sends physical disease after physical trespasses," then a correct understanding of the Under World and its relations to the whole body of society is a matter of prime importance.

High life in the Under World consists in the doings of the personages and potentates of side-streets; and the most significant feature in their life, both to themselves and to the rest of us, lies in the league between the Powers That Rule and the Powers That Prey. The Platonic idea of the case is that between detective and criminal there exists a natural feud like that between the shepherd and the wolf. The similitude is perfect in but one respect: both wolf and shepherd live at the expense of the flock. High life in the Un-

## Introduction

der World is a maze of tolerances, private contracts, understandings, courtesies; the shepherd and the wolf not infrequently kill and eat their lamb together. The Powers That Rule take tithes, the Powers That Prey prey by permission and surrender part of their plunder for the right to walk invisible.

Nor is this league a mere accident or a simple exhibition on the part of the Powers That Rule of total depravity: without the league the governing body would be helpless to perform their official duties even so well as they at present perform them. It is not true that the Powers That Rule protect in part the Powers That Prey in order that on the whole they may keep the Powers That Prey in check; it is true that the condition of their being able on the whole to keep the Powers That Prey in check is that they in part protect them. A community wholly policed by men of perfect integrity would lie at the mercy of its criminal contingent. A policeman or detective protects the spot he stands on and so much of the street as he can see and can reach with a bullet from his revolver. His actual presence at the commission of a crime is an accident against which great precautions have usually been taken; and apart from



## Introduction

his actual presence he is only less helpless than another man to trace the criminal. The real detective in a community is the whole body of well-disposed citizens; the official detective or policeman is mainly serviceable in making the arrest; and even the vigilance of the whole body of the well disposed is to an extreme degree insufficient. The professional criminal does not consort with the well disposed; they do not live in his world; they are not familiar with his face nor privy to his goings and comings; they have no means of knowing when he is "broke" and when he is flush; it is not to them in his moments of unreserve that he makes his indiscreet confidences. The only men that know who has committed a given crime are the criminal and his associates; the really effective detectives in the great cities of the United States are the unofficial detectives, the spies and traitors in the criminal classes; and the official detective who does not know where to lay his hand on such a spy or traitor and how to lay it on heavily is practically useless except as a watchman.

The following tales are records of incidents in the working of the league. A reader who looks in them for monsters of hate and wickedness

## Introduction

brought to the point of arrest by monsters of intellectual astuteness will be disappointed. He will find in them the history of certain inconspicuous events, of some of which he will have read notices in the public prints. He will find in them the inner history of the adventures of waifs and strays, who at their best needs must play a losing game; who, with all their energy and pride of life are doomed to pay; who almost never die rich; who end oftenest "dead"; who have the world abidingly against them, and never greatly concerned, even when it does not know them for what they are, to protect their property or life. It is this element in the rogues' tragedy which justifies, aesthetically, the blackness of the rôle assigned to the detective. He that striketh with a sword shall perish by the sword, or rather by a thousand swords.

# THE POWERS THAT PREY.

---

## IN THE MATTER OF HIS NIBS.

### I.

There were two James Disons, one of eminent respectability in a small city of the Empire State; the other "one of the boys" in the naughty city of New York. These two gentlemen never met, though they possessed a metaphysical identity with each other and an alternate existence. When James Dison of the little city went to the metropolis to purchase goods, James Dison of the naughty city received his letters and answered them; in particular, letters from Mrs. James Dison of the little city, in reply to which he insisted, very properly, on his eagerness to return to the delights of her society, and added certain instructions demonstrating that even during his absence his thoughts were of the moral welfare

## The Powers That Prey

of that community. In return for these courtesies in the metropolis, when James Dison of the small city revisited his accustomed office it was his practice to sign and forward to the naughty city certain checks in payment of bills which his metaphysical 'double had contracted; some of them for ponderable goods to be delivered at home, some of them for imponderable goods such as the naughty city notoriously affords.

One evening in April, 18—, James Dison of the naughty city found himself possessed of a roll of "greenbacks" and of a handsome watch, which bore a striking resemblance to a gift officially and oratorically presented in February, 18—, by the Chamber of Commerce and the Bankers' Association of the other city to their "eminent and universally honored and esteemed fellow citizen James Dison, who, by a timely exhibition of public spirit and self-sacrifice lamentably rare in this day of pecuniary ambition and short-sighted greed, saved the prosperous community of ——— from a local panic." The roll of greenbacks James Dison of the naughty city diminished from time to time in the course of the evening with the manner and gesture of

## In the Matter of His Nibs

never-mind-the-change. The watch he consulted toward six o'clock in the morning with an intellectual intensity, and decided, in a moment of lucidity remarkable under the circumstances, that he had made a night of it and would take a Turkish bath. When he had emerged from the bath and had breakfasted, he remembered that he had an appointment in Newark at the hour of ten, and that the ideal way to go to that place is to take the trolley, which he did. The conductor, who was an artist in words, requested the motorman in polite reference to the electric fluid to be good enough to "turn on that juice."

Burke Ryan was a gentleman who took his fun where he found it and to whom the universe owed a living. A certain portion of his fun he found in the naughtier delights of the naughty city, but he had received a good education and read Tacitus and Livy in the "aboriginal" and was a connoisseur in scarf-pins. In the intervals of his pleasures he collected what the universe owed him; and if he discovered it for the most part in the pockets of other people, so much the worse—for the other people; a man has a right to his own.



## The Powers That Prey

At the time when James Dison was making a night of it, Burke Ryan saw his watch-chain, and surmised his watch, and took stock of his roll of bills and his manner and gesture of never-mind-the-change. Also he recognized that by a singular exhibition of astuteness he himself had that day at the races lost the largest odds it was mathematically possible to lose, and that it was "up to him" to cut and cash with all promptitude a number of the coupons on the securities to which his creditor the universe had given him a right. One of the coupons that was obviously due lay for safe-keeping at the end of Dison's watch-chain in Dison's waistcoat pocket. Burke had discovered this fact at the moment when Dison had returned his watch to its resting-place after having consulted it with an intellectual intensity. Dison's manner of handing out his bills Burke had looked upon with a near approach to moral indignation; there was an offensive lack of principle in throwing away money that the universe owed to some one else.

When Dison entered the bath-house, Burke also entered it. He had not wanted a Turkish bath, but he took one out of *complaisance*. What he wanted really was to "touch" the little sum

## In the Matter of His Nibs

which was coming to him, and to go to bed. When Dison lingered at breakfast, Burke also lingered at breakfast, though with a growing impatience at the prolix etiquette of modern times. Not so many hundred years ago a baron of the Under World in his position would have taken shame to himself; he would have advanced upon Dison openly and, tapping him familiarly on the breast, would have explained that he had taken a fancy to certain insignificant trinkets, of which he doubted not their actual possessor, whose attention as a connoisseur he claimed for a glance at the elegance of his stiletto, would be delighted to make him a present.

When Dison entered the trolley-car, Burke also entered it and took a place beside him, although he had no business whatever in the city to which that gentleman was going. When Dison slept, his watch transferred itself to Burke's waistcoat; when Dison woke he discovered in his trousers-pocket the two longest and deftest fingers of Burke's right hand. Burke was at once so obliging as to withdraw the fingers and with them the remnant of Dison's roll of bills. Then the etiquette of modern times ceased to be prolix and the scene became as medieval as Burke could have wished.

## The Powers That Prey

Dison seized Burke by the shoulder and spoke his mind with a medieval vigor and idiom which it would be an anachronism to record. There were two women and twenty men in the car. The two women expressed the judgment of their sex upon the situation inarticulately, each at the top of her voice; the twenty men with one impulse lurched toward Burke. Burke had no stiletto to the elegance of which he could call Dison's attention as a connoisseur, but he produced a remarkably handsome razor, to the elegance of which he called Dison's attention and the attention of every one in the car. Everybody, Dison in particular, evinced a sudden interest in reaching the street; they fell over themselves in their eagerness; the women forgot even to scream, and one of them forgot the way to the door and used the window. The facetious conductor said the reason he got off was that he wanted to see what Burke's razor would look like from a distance. The last to desert his place was the motorman, whom Burke's approach seemed to afflict with acute insanity. As a preliminary to jumping off he turned on the full current, and when the car bounded forward at full speed he leaped. He did not wait to hold by the handles

## In the Matter of His Nibs

and steady himself before his feet touched the ground; he just naturally got off and did gymnastics. When he was picked up afterward he explained that he had been in a hurry.

“Stop thief!” yelled the chorus in the road.

“Go to hell!” grinned Burke.

“Find a telephone,” said one of the crowd, while another called on a man on a bicycle to “catch that car” and explained that there was a thief on it. When they explained also the nature of the thief and of his company, the bicyclist guessed he was tired and that they might catch the car themselves. “If any of you gentlemen wants the loan of my wheel, he can have it,” he said generously; “but for me—to-day’s Friday; it’s always bad luck for me to catch stolen trolleys on Friday!” None of the gentlemen wanted the loan of his wheel.

None of them wanted even to risk a pistol-shot by riding forward and attempting to keep Burke within hailing distance. The car was speeding along a stretch of deserted road with the first house by the wayside a half-mile off. Every one preferred to assure every one else that Burke must leave the trolley soon, for he would overtake the car ahead of him; though what difference it

## The Powers That Prey

made, when once he was out of sight, whether he left the trolley soon or not, nobody could suggest.

He did leave the trolley soon. In front of the one house visible stood a horse and buggy, which he halted the car to borrow, saying that he needed them in his business. A minute afterward he had disappeared.

In the meantime James Dison discovered that he had lost his watch.



## II.

It was distinctly understood in the Front Office that the "force" is the servant of the public and that every member of the public, whether a big man or a little one, was entitled to receive the best attention the force could give. It was distinctly understood also that this theory was in the nature of a party platform or declaration of principles, and was well enough in its place, but that its place was not in practice. In practice there are differences to be observed. The chief had found it necessary to become well-to-do on his savings from a small salary, and he had achieved this seeming miracle by exercising the virtues of judicious discrimination and friendship. He had never soiled his hands with bribes—he had "never done nothing not morally right—savvy?"—but it was undeniable that he had discretionary powers, and undeniable that he used them. As nobody will suppose that he used them to comfort his enemies and to discomfit his

## The Powers That Prey

friends, it must be found natural that he received a just return for benefits bestowed.

When James Dison of the naughty city discovered that he had lost his watch, the first step he took in regard to it was admirable. The first step, to be Irish, was to stand still and meditate on what his metaphysical double should say to Mrs. Dison of the other city; in particular if the affair should reach the newspapers and the omniscient reporter should employ his inalienable right of pertinent scandal. He could see the head-lines as he stood there: "Prominent Citizen on a Bat; Decorous Dison's Double Life; Revealed by Robbery at End of Spree; Bold Thief at Large in Jersey!" He could likewise see the altered countenances of the friends and fellow citizens who had glorified his double in presenting to him the watch and money so scandalously parted with. He had an exquisitely tender sensibility for what concerned his double; he felt for him as for himself. He escaped with all possible haste from the witnesses of his mischance and declined to give his name.

Dison's second step was to seek out the Front Office and obtain a private interview with the chief; and here for a moment he made a blunder.

## In the Matter of His Nibs

He had the temerity to demand a favor before he had founded its indispensable basis in friendship. The chief paused in the midst of his scrutiny of a pile of documents; official business was suspended everywhere within ear-shot, and Mr. Dison listened to the voice of authority. The chief was a man of wrath; his speech was rude and his figures of rhetoric unconventional. "No. I will not; you will take your chances like anybody else; I will keep nothing quiet. Every dashed up-state son of a hayrick thinks he can come down here and play the goat and go back home an' forgit it. If my town's tough it's you hoosiers that come down here an' turn yourselves loose an' make it so; and it's me the newspapers roast."

At this point James Dison of the naughty city was inspired to remember that James Dison of the good little city owned a block of delegates at the state capital and was high in the good graces of a Great Personage. He recited his titles to respect and mentioned the Great Personage.

"I don't care who you are, or who you know," thundered the Olympian in a passion of rectitude that made him superior to grammar; "I don't owe you money nor anybody else; you can go

## The Powers That Prey

tell him so. I'm not put here to do favors; I'm put here to execute the law, and you bet your life I'll do it!"

This was diplomacy. There are forms of speech in the Great Republic which it needs a long initiation to interpret; and James Dison was initiated. The chief had the most exalted friendship for the Great Personage Mr. Dison had named. It was the custom of that Great Personage from time to time, when he suffered with the spleen, to speak his mind to the chief with an unreserve which made the chief's eyes water—with affection! When Mr. Dison had withdrawn from the Front Office, the chief made the telephone wires hum with hurry-up calls to trusted lieutenants with names suggesting that gifted race whose people can govern everybody except themselves. When Mr. Dison returned with his credentials, his reception reminded him that Mr. Dison of the other place was not the only man in the naughty city who is blessed with a metaphysical double.

"Have already moved in that matter of yours, Mr. Dison; an accident that might happen to any gentleman."

"Even to an up-state son of a hayrick!" said the facetious Dison.

## In the Matter of His Nibs

"I will have your property delivered to you at nine in the morning at your hotel," said the chief; "and in the meantime if there are any little corners of the city that you would like to look into, I shall be glad to place a competent guide at your disposal."

"I might find some things that would be of service to me in directing our home interests; I am actively employed in local affairs," said Mr. Dison.

"Happy to be able to do anything for you I can," said the chief, offering the glad hand.

"A pleasure to have made your acquaintance," said Mr. Dison, accepting the glad hand.

This also was diplomacy; the rest was business. The chief's face and bearing when he met his lieutenants were a hurry-up order personified. He named a dozen powers and potentates by their *noms de guerre* and indicated their customary places of resort. His instructions were figurative: "Rake this town with a fine-tooth comb; I want 'em here by one o'clock. If they don't understand kindness, pinch 'em."

There is a wireless telegraphy in the Under World which is quite as effective as Marconi's, and it was soon noised about among the guns

## The Powers That Prey

that there was to be a round-up at the Front Office. A number of gentlemen who felt a delicacy about intruding upon the chief, even in the way of friendship, incontinently made themselves invisible; but the majority of those that he had mentioned were "copped out." The detectives were as much in the dark as to what was up as were the guns, and the latter consoled themselves with facetious remarks as to the object of the approaching interview. "The chief wants t' ask us to break a bottle o' sham or to notify us that he has shifted the dead-line further down town so's to give the likes o' us a chanst t' turn an honest penny," said Billy the Bruiser; and Me-Klowd remarked: "P'r'aps he is goin' to let us rubber over the recovered 'stolen goods' museum to see if we recognize any little trinkets o' our own."

The interview took place in the chief's private office.

"Curly," he asked in confidential tones, addressing the man from 'Frisco, "what do you know 'bout that touch that was pulled off over in Jersey this morning on the trolley? Somebody got a thimble [watch] and a roll o' dough."

"First I've heard of it, Chief. I don't know nothin'."



## In the Matter of His Nibs

"It's up to you, MeKlowd."

"I'm dead about it too, Chief. Just got out a-bed a little while before Curry found me."

"How about you, Billy?"

"Dead too. Keeps me busy keepin' track o' touches this side the river."

"Well, a touch came off, an' I want the thing cleared up. I'll give it to you fellows straight—the touch never should 'a' come off, an' it's up to me to get the gun an' the things. I've got you up here to read the riot act to you, an' you'd better read it to the rest o' the gang. I've been easy on some o' you blokes 'cause I know 't you've got families here an' want to stay with 'em, but I'll tell you on the level that if you don't cough up that gun I'll put a dead-line around this whole town. Now, you can take your choice. That's all I've got to say to you, but I want you, MeKlowd, to wait a little."

The consultation with MeKlowd was short but significant.

"Ruderick, I might as well give you the truth as a steer. The sucker that was touched is a friend o' his Nibs—you know who I mean—an' his Nibs is hostile. It's the second time 't he's had a grouch on, an' I've got to put up a good



## The Powers That Prey

front. If the thing don't go right, I'll be in a hell of a hole, an' I want to know if you'll pull it through. I can't get that gun inside of a month if you blokes don't help me, an' I've kept the sucker here in town on the plea that it'll all be over in a day or so. Will you get the push to cough up? "

" Anythin' doin' afterward? "

" I can't make no deal with you, Ruderick—you know that well enough. I been pretty square with you an' the push, ain't I? Well, it stands to reason 't I ain't goin' to get a grouch on if you an' the push do me a favor, don't it? "

" A' right. Forty-eight hours you said, didn't you? If it's only twenty-four you won't object, I suppose? "

" It'll make my rep all the better if it's only twelve."

" A' right. So-long."

" So-long, Ruderick."

### III.

Ruderick McKlowd was a product of the city of tall buildings and tall talk—the “Western Metrololis” he sometimes called it, and sometimes “Chi.” His passion for the town was only less pronounced than his passion for his profession, and he had arrived at that stage in his development when the name of his birthplace had been incorporated in his personal appellation, after the manner of powers and potentates and nobility in general: he was known to the initiated as the “Slick Chi Gun.”

His business engagements were so far-reaching that it was only infrequently that he was to be met in the city of his name, and there were periods when, on account of another community's interest in him and demand upon his time, he was compelled to deny the town the honor of his presence for years at a stretch; but he always spoke affectionately of the place, and it was a well-understood ambition of his to be buried “on

## The Powers That Prey

de Lake Front." In appearance he would not necessarily have been picked out for an inhabitant of Chicago. He had, to be sure, the Chicago business man's plunging walk; he was always in a hurry; his ability to interest other people and other people's money in his enterprises may possibly also be characterized as a Chicago trait; but in other respects he fitted into the life of New York or any other great city with as few rough edges to be polished off as probably any man of his temperament and training. An innocent little histrionic gift that he possessed—and exercised—commonly enabled him to pass with a casual acquaintance for almost anything, from a successful lawyer to a sea-captain. But there were those in whose presence he frankly admitted that he was "Ruderick McKlowd and what are you going to do about it?"

He was some five and forty years old, tall, well-built, clean-shaven, with a look in his face which was described by knowing ones as the obvious "mug of a crook." By those who did not know, it might easily have seemed the intense look of a preoccupied and rather hard man of affairs. When on the loaf, he sauntered through the streets unobtrusively, sometimes greeting his

## In the Matter of His Nibs

friends and sometimes not, taking in the sights. Certain wiseacres claimed that he was "rubbering," and attention was sometimes called to "that greedy look of his eyes"; but this could not have been proved in a court of law. If he passed a friend whom he found it convenient not to recognize after the ordinary forms of greeting, he gave a peculiar guttural cough, sometimes called the thief's cough, or made a noise with his lips such as goes with a kiss, and it was frequently his misfortune to have these signs misinterpreted by denizens of the Front Office; but he had very convincing explanatory powers, and seldom found it difficult to square misunderstandings to the satisfaction of all concerned. On occasions, particularly if he had been "hitting it up," he made no attempt to explain or to excuse, but suggested that the Front Office "come out an' get its face put in."

MeKlowd was almost as popular at the Front Office as he was in his push. From the strict moralist's point of view his record there was bad; but there were some things esoterically to his credit, which the moralist does not understand. The chief himself had more than once declared that "if Ruderick had only had an 'ed-

## The Powers That Prey

dication ' he would have ranked among the salubrious men of history." It was the opinion of Ruderick's intimates that he had made a mark enviably high without taking his doctor's degree; but, of course, they judged him by a standard of their own. The chief's liking for Ruderick was appreciated and respected. In the days when the chief had been struggling for honor and promotion in "the street," it fell to his lot to arrest certain "gentlemen of fortune" who protested *vi et armis*, which is hieroglyphic for "with knife and fist." The chief might never have come out of the scrimmage alive if Ruderick hadn't "happened around" about that time. The chief, to his credit be it said, never forgot this coincidence.

It has been said on good authority that, if the thieves of a town could be persuaded to become its policemen, and to act "on the level," the appropriations for municipal defense might be very greatly reduced. Certain it is that they have a sense of the thing necessary to be done—a theft having been committed—which our municipal and private detective organizations have failed to improve upon.

"How much time we got, Ruderick?" asked Billy the Bruiser.

## In the Matter of His Nibs

"Twenty-four hours."

"He jus' wants the thimble an' the roll, ain't that it?"

"No, he wants the gun too. His Nibs is hostile, you see, an' this yap from the country 's got pull, an' it's up to the chief to make a splurge."

"Will he let the bloke go?"

"Didn't say nothin' 'bout that. P'r'aps he will after he's let the yap rubber at him. I don't give a damn whether he does or not. It was a bunglin' job, an' the bloke deserves a stretcher. Besides, see all the trouble he's givin' us. He'll queer the whole of us if we don't get him."

"That's right," commented Billy. "No one bloke 's got any business queerin' the push; if he has got to take a stretcher then he has, an' that's all there is about it. Same thing happened out in Chi once. Old 'Frisco Slim touched up one o' the big joolry places not knowin' that it was in the Eye's dead-line. We had to cough him up—it 'ud been a case o' drill if we hadn't. Well, I tell you, Ruderick, I'll screw my nut down town an' rubber around, lettin' the blokes know what's doin'. You'll put the people up here next, will you? A' right. Where'll we report?"



## The Powers That Prey

“Up in my rooms.”

The two men separated and began “putting the blokes next.” Ruderick dropped into saloon after saloon, talking quietly with men sitting at tables or standing at the bar, and pretty soon these men were to be seen coming out on to the street and taking different directions. He talked to them in a language unique for its abbreviations and directness. There were no long explanations. The simple statement, backed up by Ruderick’s presence, that “the Front Office wanted to know who made that touch in Jersey, and wanted the swag and the gun,” sufficed to set going an unequaled detective agency.

There were no silly trips to Jersey to inspect “the scene of the crime,” no long interviews with reporters about suggested clues, and no “keeping the wires hot.” “Guns” of all ages and conditions strolled quietly up and down Manhattan, “rubbering,” passing the time o’ day and putting people “next.” One would enter a “joint,” give a cough and pass on to a rear room where he was joined by those whom his cough had attracted. “Find out who got that thimble an’ the roll on the trolley over in Jersey—the chief is hostile an’ wants to know—Ruderick



## In the Matter of His Nibs

MeKlowd is on the case," and another half dozen recruits were enlisted for the honor of the chief.

A "touch" is to the Under World what an Associated Press news item, or "the flimsy," is to the newspaper world: knowledge of it is common property to those who are in the guild. There are a hundred "touches" and more every day of which the police hear nothing, but the Under World knows all about them, who made them, what was realized on them, and where the "get-away" took place. Gossip about "touches" is as essential to the Under World as is gossip about marriages and births to the Upper World. Burke Ryan could no more forego the pleasure of telling his pals about the "touch" on the trolley in Jersey than he could resist the temptation to "pull it off." He had "hocked" the watch and invested the greater part of the roll in a quiet little game of poker by the time Ruderick MeKlowd and the push were on his trail, and he had also published widely the details of the theft, only Ruderick and his companions had not yet reached the "joints" where the story had been told. At the very moment that Ruderick and Billy the Bruiser were agreeing on the campaign to find him, Burke was in a saloon

## The Powers That Prey

not over ten blocks distant telling some cronies how he had "to clear the deck" on the trolley with his razor to make good his "mooch," and giving them amusing accounts of how the "Molls dove out o' the windows" in their haste to give him room.

"An' the sucker 't I'd touched," he went on, referring to the naughty Mr. Dison, "he jus' sat down an' t'rew a fit. Yelled like a stuck pig."

Burke had his friends in the push as well as did Ruderick, and there was one, "Jimmy" Ryerson by name, who felt that it was "up to him" to let Burke know that Ruderick and his push were in pursuit. He had a score to settle with the chief which had been troubling him for months in his sense of honesty, and he considered the present occasion a good one to discharge his debt. Burke had told him of the "touch" early in the day, and Ruderick's enterprise had been made known to him not long after. He knew that the majority in the push were with Ruderick, but the opportunity to "turn down" the chief was too good to be lost, and Burke was advised of his peril.

"Do they jus' want the dough an' the watch," asked Burke, "or are they after me too?"

## In the Matter of His Nibs

"They're after you, you duffer," said Jimmy, "an' they'll have you if you don't mooch. You've been chewin' the rag all over town, an' somebody's told 'em by this time."

"Do you mean to say that they're goin' to turn me over to the chief?"

"That's what they are, an' you'll be settled, too. His Nibs is on his ear, they say, an' the chief's got to square things."

"Well they can go plump to hell. I ain't no sucker to help out that chief—let him help himself out. I'm goin' to mooch right"—his speech was cut short by the entrance into the saloon of Ruderick and two "pals."

. . . . .  
It was a chase which is talked about still when chases come up for discussion. It began below Twenty-third street and ended in a vacant lot near the Eighth Avenue Elevated Railroad Terminal, and is probably the only pursuit of a criminal in whose arrest criminals alone were interested. Trolley-cars, cabs and the "elevated" were all used by both the pursued and the pursuers, and a fierce struggle ended the flight. As a last resort Burke took his stand in a fence corner of the vacant lot, drew his razor, and dared

## The Powers That Prey

Ruderick and his two companions to touch him. "It's a case o' knock-out," said Ruderick, and poor Burke was made the target for stones swiftly thrown and carefully aimed. He stood it as long as he could, his face and hands being cut and bruised and smeared all over with blood, and then cried out: "I cave—I cave!"

"Couldn't help it, Burke, old man," said Ruderick soothingly. "Three to one ain't fair, but it's business. The chief needs you, an' we need the chief—see?"

## A BILL FROM TIFFANY'S.

### I.

The beginning of things was a woman, and the middle was another woman, and the end was miscellaneous naughtiness, casualties and matrimony. Metaphysically speaking, there are causes other than women at work in determining human affairs, but it has never been found at once indispensable and impossible to take them into account.

Miss Sadie Meeker was a young woman who was interested in the market value of things; particularly in the market value of herself. As a money-changer at the desk in Major & Fairbank's her market value was just four dollars a week; but a woman's real market value, as Sadie well knew, is never what she can honestly earn, but what the best man who wishes to marry her can earn, whether honestly or not. Later she came to think seven times out of ten of her husband and the remaining three of her children; but for the

## The Powers That Prey

moment she was conscious mainly that Margie Payne had married a 'saloon-keeper, and Kittie Barwin a part-owner in a dance-hall; and saloon-keepers and part-owners in dance-halls are lords and landed gentry in the Under World.

Margie and Kittie had been Sadie's next friends, and for some time after their marriage she too would have been contented to wed a saloon-keeper or a part-owner in a dance-hall; but Margie, when all was said, did wear her clothes, no matter how expensive, as if they were on the point of sliding off, and Kittie, in spite of her pretty hair, had bad teeth. That is to say, in the Under World a chief of detectives is a prince and potentate; and if Charley Minick was not yet a chief of detectives he well might become one, at least with a woman whose clothes cost money to spur him on. Sadie's teeth were perfect, and she filled out her gown like a dressmaker's model; her hair, besides, was quite as good as Kittie's, and her complexion was wonderful. After some hesitation she concluded, therefore, with a delightful sense at once of playing for high stakes and of generosity, to become engaged to marry Charley Minick. Also his mustache curled beautifully.



## A Bill from Tiffany's



Charley Minick in his twenty-eighth year had achieved a knowledge how the world is made. This perception is strictly a matter of male intelligence; women know nothing whatever about it, their concern lying wholly with fictions. He had joined the "force" with a resolution to be an "honest copper"; and his high aspirations still clung to him, though they had become modified. He would not be so honest as to be unpleasant; he would be just a little—oh! the veriest trifle—better than his neighbors. This course permitted him to attain the delights both of popularity and of pride, and may be said to be sanctioned by the example of a working majority of the truly great. "I don't set up for no saint," said the magnanimous Minick, "but there are places where I draws the line." A Pitt or a Lincoln could have said no more.

He was capable on occasion of a certain doggedness and intensity of reflection; and at the time of his engagement Sadie had provided an occasion. Margie's gifts from her lover had been diamonds of price; Kittie's gifts from her lover had been diamonds of even greater price; and Sadie was perfectly aware of every woman's inalienable right to possess better jewels than any



## The Powers That Prey

woman of her acquaintance, if she can induce a man to give them to her. She explained her views to Minick with vigor and point; she revealed to him the double jurisdiction under which he had agreed to live; he must stand his trial in the judgment of her peers. Therefore Minick referred to her hilariously as her Grace the Duchess of Major & Fairbank's, and looked upon her with increased happiness and admiration. A man always looks upon a woman with increased happiness and admiration when she asks the impossible and makes him do it.

"Well, you wouldn't have me be ashamed before Kit and Marge, would you?"

"The Pearl of Pie Alley couldn't stand ashamed before Kit and Marge; she hasn't got the shape! But I forgot; it's a man that's proud of a woman's shape; the woman's only proud of what she's got on it!"

"Even now they say I'm a fool to tie up with you. They say there's no scale in your job the way there is in Jim's and Bob's; they call you a hundred-a-month man; they say you don't take in nothing on the side. Kit and Marge said last night I was marrying you for your '*musstache*.'"

## A Bill from Tiffany's

"Kit and Marge!" said the alert detective with theatric scorn; "Kit and Marge are a couple of clapper-tongued pot-wrestlers; you'll make your ears long as a gover'ment mule's a-listenin' to 'em. Jim married Kit for *her* 'musstache,' you know he did; an' what she says o' mine is pure envy!"

"Yes, I suppose. But I ain't talking of 'musstaches'; I'm serious; it means a lot to me. You've got to get me what I want; that's what you marry me for! and you've got to go to the right place to get it—I tell you those; I want to show Kit and Marge the box."

"All right," laughed Minick, "I'll get you the box!"

Three days after this conversation there was a great social "event" at the town house of Edward Sandys of Sandys & Merton, who served God and mankind to the amount of some millions per annum. They performed their service largely by accepting a controlling interest in undertakings to which the name of Sandys & Merton lent a commercial value. The great social "event," with its great display of plate and jewels, was followed by a great cracksman's "events." Before the awakening of the Sandys household

## The Powers That Prey

after the festival a judiciously selected portion of the jewels had disappeared. The reward offered was so large that the Front Office was touched in its tenderest sensibilities; there seemed something almost wicked in declining to supply a man, anxious to part with a sum like that, with a chance to hand it over.

The instructions of the chief were a model of manly eloquence: "Somebody's got to get that dough; Sandys 'll t'row a fit if he can't cough up, and you coppers got to help him. I ain't goin' to have the Eye people snake in all the loose coin; I give it to you straight. They more'n did us on that Hogan deal; an' the papers roasted *me*. They called me a 'jaundiced tutelary dodo'; I don't know what the blamed thing means, but I won't stand for it. I can't get at the feller that wrote it, but I can make your skins too hot to hold you if he gets a chanst to do it again. A town as big as this can find its own guns without callin' in private fly cops. You fellows spread yourselves on this case, you take my tip. Get your mouthpieces on the run, bribe 'em, pinch 'em, do what you damn please, but get that dough. An' get the gun too. Some o' the country papers have been shoutin' 'bout

## A Bill from Tiffany's

this force bein' crooked; they say that we're only out for the dough in jobs like this, an' let the gun make a get-away. I'm sick o' this hollerin', and if it don't quit I'll make every man jack of you sick of it too!"

That afternoon an ornate reporters'-column in one of the public prints consisted of an interview with the "subtle and competent Detective Minick"; it referred to him alternately as another Sherlock Holmes and as a second Old Sleuth. Sadie did not know who Sherlock Holmes and Old Sleuth were; when Kittie asked her, she said they were former chiefs of police; and there were a number of words in the article she could not understand; but the general drift of it she perceived was commendatory, and she felt an immediate access of affection for Charley—and was sorry she had not asked for a bigger diamond. Charley was alleged to be "working" on the Sandys case. His work for the moment consisted in examining the scene of the robbery, in making notes of seventeen particulars which he perfectly believed to be insignificant, and in arresting three servants whom he perfectly believed not guilty. Out of the seventeen insignificant

## The Powers That Prey

particulars he formulated a "theory" of the case so ingenious that no man in his senses would act upon it. Happily he did not make it to act upon; he made it to give to the newspapers. These things he did in order that Mr. Sandys and the public might recognize that he was "taking an interest." When he had secured this point, he was perfectly at a loss what to do next except, as he phrased it, "to rubber around," which is technical and esoteric for keeping his eyes and ears open. Every one else who was "working" on the case was equally at a loss; every one was just rubbering around.

One morning while matters were at this pass the chief handed Minick a telegram which was dated Akron, Ohio. It signified that one Bud Denmer, age thirty-six, height five feet eleven and a quarter, complexion dark, eyes blue hazel, hair prematurely gray and black, beard solid black, teeth good, nose large and pugnacious, weight a hundred and sixty-five pounds, was "wanted," and was supposed to be in New York. The reward was five hundred dollars and the particulars would follow by letter.

## II.

Women, in the Great Republic at least, are superior to men in everything, except the ability to remain in large cities during the hot season. This is the almost universal testimony of those who have given the question the greatest amount of attention, and, when specialists agree, it ill becomes the uninformed to profess an opinion. The point is that Mrs. Richard Cober was an exception to the general rule; she found it impossible to master the elements of applied mathematics. Even in the matter of the currency she could never be got to understand that one dollar is no better than another dollar, when the first dollar was her own and the second was some one else's; and when the calculation came to concern husbands and children her incapacity reached its extreme.

Richard Cober was fast becoming the head of a profession of which he was proud, but which he disliked to hear called by its right name. He was only from time to time actively engaged in



## The Powers That Prey

it, and it took him for the most part out of town into the beyond. He was understood by his children, and nominally by his wife, to be a "traveling" man. His absences would last for a few days or a few weeks, and out of the beyond he would commonly bring back a great deal of money or a very bad temper. Once his absence lasted nearly three years, and he brought back only a new suit of clothes, a pallid face and a most unpleasant trick of the eyes. Little Bessie said that he looked like a "bogy-man," and little Bobbie said he "'ooked 'ike a fief"; and both cried out and clapped their hands and ran in great glee to greet him. Mamma afterward explained to them that he had had an accident in the beyond and had been for a long while confined to the house, and that it had been bad for him to use his eyes. Bessie told him she was "*so* sorry—*ever* so sorry—*really!*"—for his accident; and Bobbie assured him that he did not look in the least "'ike a fief," but "'ike a dear 'dorable papa."

When Richard Cober was in luck he was lavish with his "kids," and at all times liked nothing better than to have them tumbling over him; and whether or not he was in luck, there was nothing



## A Bill from Tiffany's

their mamma could want that he did not find a way to provide. Bobbie may have erred in the letter in his consolatory assurance, but he was right in his main intention. It may be doubted whether Richard "looked" adorable; for the most part he looked uncommonly sharp and hard; but in his daintily upholstered flat in Clinton Place he was at least adored. He sang songs and cut a double-shuffle for the kids and played at blind man's buff; and Mrs. Cober possessed jewels that would have made Sadie Meeker's frosty eyes burn with desire. Of an evening it was his habit to spend some hours in brilliantly lit rooms supplied liberally with mirrors and with round hardwood tables, at which men with diamond scarf-pins and *boutonnieres* sat or lolled in easy chairs and called for drinks. Because his own diamond scarf-pin and *boutonniere* were not conspicuously large but unmistakably more "choice," everybody hailed him admiringly as "Buck," and demanded what he would "take."

One afternoon while Bessie was dandling a doll half as big as herself, and Richard and Bobbie were doing a cake-walk with an energy and freedom of grimace and gesture that made her scream with laughter, the door opened and a gentleman,

## The Powers That Prey

who had held a little colloquy with the maid in the hall, entered unannounced. The gentleman was Detective Minick.

There was an instant in which if Detective Minick had been a timid man he would have found the sight of Richard bad for his nerves. That the sight of Minick was bad for Richard's nerves there was not the slightest doubt. But there are courtesies in the Under World; even men who play for stakes as high as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness permit themselves the luxury of treating one another with respect.

"Eighteen-carat place you got here, Buck, old sport; pie-anna, French clock, Turkey rugs, nice kids; things been goin' your way."

"Don't look as if you'd been up against hard luck yourself. Skip, kids. Mr. Minick and me will be wanting to bill and coo in private."

These were amenities. People do not shake hands in the Under World except as a sign of extreme formality; neither do they look one another steadily in the face except in anger; they glance at one another from time to time and converse at an angle of forty-five degrees. Also a certain gruffness of manner and voice are *de rigueur*. It was Detective Minick's profession

## A Bill from Tiffany's

to bring every man's trouble home to him; but he had the reputation of executing his disagreeable task with as little offense as possible. It was an incident of Richard Cober's profession that he did not like to have people call on him; it always made him uncomfortable until they stated their business, and then sometimes it made him still more uncomfortable.

"Somethin' doin'?" he asked with laconic elegance.

"A little matter o' my own. I want you to put me next."

"What the blazes do you come to me about 'next' for? I ain't next to nothin' in this town except you dead ones at the Front Office."

"Read the papers lately?"

"One o' you fly cops croaked an' you want to touch me for a bouquet for the stiff?"

"Seen the details o' that Sandys job?"

"Oh it's that, is it? You can search *me*. You'll have to guess again if you want to pick a winner. I ain't mixed up in that. I haven't done any work in this town for five years; I live here, an' you know well enough that where I live there's nothin' doin'. I've got too much at stake."

## The Powers That Prey

“Don’t suppose I’d be sittin’ here rubberin’ at your wall-paper, if you done it, do you? But I want you to get mixed up in it. There’s five thousand semoleons reward, an’ I need ’em in my business.”

“Who told you ’t I was interested in your business? I got troubles o’ my own.”

These also were amenities. The next statement was open combat.

“It won’t do, Charley; I give it to you straight, I didn’t do the job myself an’ don’t know who did; but if I did know I wouldn’t tell you. I ain’t got nothing against you personally; you always treated me square, an’ I’d go as far for you as another man; but I never yet beefed on a pal an’ I’m not goin’ to begin. I know it’s done, as well as you do; I haven’t heard of a reward these last ten years that you people have copped out that some gun didn’t help you get; but you can keep the dough for all me—when you get it. I’m a bad lot if you like, but I wouldn’t turn mouthpiece for the whole five thousand.”

“Better wait till I offer ’em,” said Minick intently; “what’ll you do for this?” Minick passed him with one hand a telegram from Akron, Ohio, and with the other fingered a revolver

## A Bill from Tiffany's

in his coat-pocket. Minick's acquaintances whom he met in the way of business were sometimes spasmodic in their movements. Also Richard Cober was age thirty-six, height five feet eleven and a quarter, complexion dark, eyes blue hazel, hair prematurely gray and black, beard—that is to say, close-cut mustache—solid black, teeth good, nose large and pugnacious, weight a hundred and sixty-five pounds.

“Swell place you got here, Buck; pie-anna, French clock, Turkey rugs, nice kids; I should think you'd hate to shift.”

Minick was to be congratulated on the completeness with which he had thought out his case.

“I don't want to be hard on you, Buck; I'll give you time all right to turn the thing over in your mind; but understand *me*, I want those semoleons. If you should happen to discover a way of helpin' me get them, well!—it's been six years since I seen Bud Denmer in Joliet; I might be so stuck on myself I couldn't recognize him in the street if I passed him a dozen times a day; an' I'm the only man on the force that's onto his mug. If you shouldn't happen to discover a way of helpin' me, that telegram reads cuffs in Clinton Place, jail in Akron, Stir in Columbus,

## The Powers That Prey

free rides between pints, an' free grub an' lodgin' everywhere."

"Dick, you've said time after time that if it ever came to a pass again where you had to choose between me and the kids and a gun, you'd let the gun go; and you're up against that choice now," urged Mrs. Richard Cober when Minick had said "so-long" and taken his leave. "You've got enough money saved up to quit the business anyhow. I've often told you that with what we have in the bank we could go over to London, bring up the kids respectably and live decently ourselves."

"A man like me's no business with kids, Nell, old girl; nor with a woman either," said Cober wearily, not for the first time in his life "up against" the eternal difference between a woman's world and a man's.



### III.

Be it known that in the Under World as in the Upper everybody minds his own business when his own business is pressing; when it is not, he minds conscientiously and discusses with unction the business of everybody else. Speaking broadly, the only person who knows nothing and can discover nothing of who did what is the detective; he is as well known as if he moved about preceded by a town crier; on all sides of him the words that it concerns him to hear are vibrating in the air; the vibrations die away just before they reach his ears.

That evening, after his pacific interview with Minick, Cober loitered listlessly about the better sort of haunts of the Powers That Prey. He was caught up by groups who back mathematics *versus* confidence and stand to win, and heard the latest gossip about the favorite, the odds offered and asked, the latest news of the champion's "condition," the latest arrangements for a "fake" match of bantam-weights, in which ev-

## The Powers That Prey

everybody who put money on the sure thing was to gain experience at the end of a rally in the eighth round. He heard the last great score at billiards, the last great game at hazard, and received an invitation to make one of a select party forming to work the crowd at the coming Cincinnati Saengerfest. From time to time in the lull of more urgent affairs a remark was dropped that "Blinky" pulled off a good thing two days ago at "Phillie," that that had been a tidy "get-away" the night before on Fifty-ninth street ("Long Morgan, you know," was added in a lower tone by way of complete information), and that "Barney" had not been seen for some days and must have something "on."

Richard would have been too shrewd, which is to say he loved his own skin too intelligently, to put direct questions about the Sandys job; nor would there have been the least reason why he should ask questions. The Sandys job was just becoming a subject of impassioned surmise. Twenty times in the evening Cober himself was asked if he knew who did it; twenty times he listened to notes of admiration of the cleverness with which it had been planned and executed and to the opinion that it was the work of "outside

## A Bill from Tiffany's

talent." Before the evening was gone he came to loathe outside talent; he was sick of outside talent, he was sick of the neatness of the Sandys job, he was sick of the choice that he must make, and of the evil that must befall him no matter what he chose. For himself he cared really little enough, if the truth were told, but it was altogether true that a man like him had no business with a woman and kids.

He had fully mastered his ideas in this connection when he entered "The Green Dragon" and the presiding Belial stepped forward and handed him a note. It consisted of but two lines and a signature—he had received the precise duplicate of it just as he was leaving Clinton Place: "I want to see you in a hurry, Buck. Pull the ringer at the number given in the other note. L. C." Half an hour afterward he was sitting at the bedside of Lubin Cavanaugh, in a house on Sixteenth street, where single gentlemen were permitted to pay exorbitant rates for lodging in exchange for the privilege of presenting introductions which guaranteed their reputability. When in obedience to a weak-voiced summons to "come in" Richard first entered the room, he perceived an emaciated head fallen back in an ecstasy of ex-

## The Powers That Prey

haustion among the pillows; when the emaciated head had identified its visitor as "Buck" Cober, it hailed him with "Hello, Old Sport!" and the man to whom it belonged sat upright, threw back the bedclothes and resumed an interrupted labor, which was the labor of "setting," or possibly, as Richard judged, of resetting, jewels.

"Thought you might be the doctor with some more dope. He an' I are doin' a little song an' dance together while I fix up this pennyweight job. I'm playin' the pennyweight game alone, an' he might want to cut in. He'd speculate on these sparklers in his bill, if he knew I had 'em—beutes, ain't they?"

The time had been when a "sparkler" had the same fascination for Richard Cober that it had for Lubin Cavanaugh, but he was in no mood that evening to admire another man's plunder. A wonder as to the previous ownership of the jewels he could not repress—even in the "Stir" men make guesses as to the origin of an unscheduled piece of bread—but the etiquette of the Under World forbids inquiry in regard to such matters.

"Then it's just a song an' dance?" Richard asked, referring to the bottles of medicine on the table and Cavanaugh's reclining position.

## A Bill from Tiffany's

"That's all. Never felt better in my life. The doc calls it symptoms o' pneumonia, but they're the kind you an' I had when we made out we was dyin' o' consumption out in the Joliet Stir. 'Member how we got into the hospital, don't cher? You faded away on soap, an' I jus' kept a-coughin'. There was 'bout fifty of us dyin' o' consumption that stretcher, wasn't there? What you so blue about, Buck? Dig into that booze there, an' get a brace on. You an' Nell ain't been havin' a row, have you?"

The reference to Richard's domestic relations was merely experimental. Cavanaugh was in such good spirits himself that he could only fall back on the bachelor's chronic surmise when a married friend is out of sorts.

"No. It's jus' a general case o' grouch. I get hiped ev'ry now an' then jus' as I used to. What can I do for you, Lubin? I got to shift in a few minutes."

The two looked at each other for an instant in that quick, but piercing way which all guns, let alone pals, have. Merely a week's separation is sufficient to make necessary this preliminary test of a comrade's loyalty, before new contracts can be entered into. Cavanaugh believed that he

## The Powers That Prey

saw in his old companion the same "Buck" Cober of "square deals" and no "beefs."

"I'd 'a' let you into the job, Buck," he said, "but it was jus' the kind o' game to attract an old single-handed stiff like myself, an' I played it alone. What I want is a 'dopp' just like this one without the break," and he handed Cober a little instrument newly broken. "I've got to have a new one by eleven o'clock to-morrow morning, an' I'll be dead obliged to you if you'll get it for me. I'd get it myself, but I got these symptoms, you know, an' the push thinks I'm out at that crib in Mexico, rollin' the wheel. Understand, don't cher? Say, Buck, if it's dough you need, reach under my pillow here an' you'll find a roll. I been there myself, you know."

"That's all right, Lube. 'Tain't as bad as that."

"Well, take care o' yourself, old man, an' if you see any o' the push, tell 'em I'm baskin' in the sun down among the Mexies. So long, Buck."

. . . . .  
"Well?" said Mrs. Cober expectantly, when Richard paused at the close of his account of the evening's interview with Cavanaugh.



## A Bill from Tiffany's

"Well! It's cuffs in Clinton Place, jail in Akron, free rides between pints, free grub an' lodgin' everywhere. I can't 'beef' on a pal like Cavanaugh, Nell. A man's got to stick by his friends."

"It ain't a case o' beefin' on a pal, Dick; it's a case o' doin' dirt by me an' the kids. There ain't one o' your friends has stood by you like me an' the kids; if you got to stick by your friends, you got to stick by us."

"It won't do, Nell; a gun's seen his luck when he turns mouthpiece; I've watched it since I was a little shaver sellin' papers an' graftin' molls. Be square with the push an' the push'll be square with you, an' it'll be the better for you in the end. I don't even know for sure that Cavanaugh made the touch; but whether he did or not, he'd know I had split on him, an' he'd follow me till he croaked."

In an earlier period of her married life Mrs. Cober would at this point have resorted to tears or to blandishments. She had learned, however, that there were times when Dick meant what he said, and she was of opinion as she studied him that this was one of the times. She did not in the least give up the battle; a hard man makes

## The Powers That Prey

a hard wife—unless he kills her!—and she had her idea. If she had been altogether wise she would have held her tongue, but it is not in nature to be so wise as that.

“A woman is perfectly helpless when she’s tied to a man that means to play the fool,” she said bitterly. “You have to be square to the push or the push will get even with you; you can do as you like by the woman an’ the kids. No matter what you do, they’ve got to stand for it.”

This statement being self-evident, Richard Cober made no reply to it; he went to bed. Half an hour later Mrs. Cober put on her hat and shawl and softly left the house: that perhaps was a part of her idea.

#### IV.

The raid was one of those ordinary man-hunts with the game at bay, the details of which even the newspapers have long since wearied of reporting. The "flatties" in uniforms surrounded the place, and Minick with three fellow huntsmen went into the building to face an animal rather more dangerous than one of the larger carnivora. The animal, however, was intelligent. Cavanaugh had not the slightest chance of escape, and knew it the minute his door was forced open and the detectives drew their revolvers. "They're good," he remarked in the gambler's jargon, and allowed himself to be handcuffed. His only comment on the capture lay in the words: "Another case of beef."

The Sandys jewels were all found in Cavanaugh's possession, a number of them very skillfully reset and two of the larger very skillfully disfigured. The public prints rang the next day with the praise of the celebrated Minick and repeated their version of the unrecognized intellect-

## The Powers That Prey

ual profession, which taxes the swiftest and subtlest powers of the mind and to which society owes its immunity from crime. "If a man is built for the perfession," the illustrious Minick was reported to have said, "he can cop out a gun as if by miracle; if he ain't, he can sit at table with the man that's wanted an' study his photograph an' go home a dead one." . . . Every reporter agreed that the celebrated Minick was "built for the perfession," and had laid his hand as if by miracle on the man that was wanted; what they did not give him credit for was a gift for statement not greatly unlike their own.

Sadie Meeker drew the attention of both Margie and Kittie to the most highly ornate paragraphs in praise of the celebrated Minick and enjoyed the proud delight of fame. She had been in some doubt until the newspapers took him up whether she cared for him "really," but the reporters' eloquence decided her. When the ring was brought a great flush of triumph came into her face—the diamond was bigger than Kittie's and prettier. "Oh, Charley, there *is* scale in your job," she exclaimed, "and I *will* marry you—for your mustache!" The "box" was as satisfactory as the stone, and a receipted bill from Tiffany's was even more satisfactory than the

## A Bill from Tiffany's

box; but there were a number of items of which Tiffany took no account.

. . . . .

The week that the marriage of Detective Minick was announced, an incident occurred in one of the side-streets of the city of Mexico. Different accounts of the affair appeared at the time in the police columns of the daily press of the city, but the only arrest that was ever made was of the young man who, on reading the items in the newspapers, volunteered the information that on the night of the incident in question he had seen a suspicious-looking figure loitering about the corner where the injured man was found. He said furthermore that on turning the corner himself he had heard the sound of a bit of scuffling, but there was no outcry. He very much regretted, as he stated to the police, that he had not turned back and investigated, but he was in a hurry at the time and gave no serious heed to the episode. He described the suspicious-looking man that he had seen merely as a heavily built man with noticeably square jaws, and added that he looked like an American, although of this he was, of course, not sure. Naturally, the police tried to find a reason for "holding" the young

## The Powers That Prey

man; it served him right for offering information that led to nothing; but his good name among his neighbors as well as with certain influential city officials, made it impossible seriously to suspect him. At the city hospital, where the injured man was taken, certain papers and checks found in his pockets showed that he conducted his financial affairs at least over the name of Oliver Hewes, but the police were much puzzled to find tattooed in blue ink on the left forearm, the name "Buck Cober." The lettering was somewhat blurred, and the inference of the police was that the man had tried to prick it out with milk. He never regained consciousness, and it was impossible to obtain any statement from him. The wound in his head seemed to indicate that he had been hit with an uncommonly heavy billy. A woman came forward from nowhere in particular to claim the body, but she showed no disposition to supply biographical details; she dedicated her energy to hysterics.

It has, perhaps, no connection with this incident that two weeks previously the following paragraph appeared in various newspapers in the United States: "Lubin Cavanaugh, alias New York Lube, escaped from —— prison last



## A Bill from Tiffany's

night. He is a notorious professional burglar and has a record against him which takes up several pages of the ——— prison's blotter. A reward of \$500 is offered for his capture and imprisonment until the prison authorities can be communicated with." There are those who rate themselves "wise," however, who believe that the two trivial incidents are connected, and that a belated item should be added to the Bill from Tiffany's.

## THE REVENGE OF THE FOUR.

### I.

One evening, or rather one morning, in May, 189—, in the "Slide," which everybody knows, though that is not its name, a mixed company of men and women were glad that they were young. Therefore they ordered miscellaneous drinks and smoked cigarettes and listened to three "darkies" explain, to the accompaniment of three guitars, that they find the Western Union a convenience no matter where they roam, and that they will telegraph their baby, who'll send ten or twenty maybe, and they won't have to walk back home.

In marked contrast with the other visitors that evening at the "Slide," there sat close about a table, in earnest consultation, four celebrities, whom the "house" treated with distinguished deference.

There is a little black book without a title or title-page in which very good woodcuts may be

## The Revenge of the Four

seen of the faces of the four celebrities and of other celebrities, friends and rivals of the four. Also there are capital photographs of the four and of their friends and rivals; and on each of the photographs as on each of the woodcuts there is a number, and corresponding to each number there is a minute description, beginning with "Name and Alias" and ending in "Remarks." This book and these photographs are not dealt in by the trade, neither are they for sale or general distribution by any one; they are made for the use of gentlemen who commit such portraits to memory as if they were words in a strange language, and who walk abroad, with the knowledge thus acquired, in the deliberate wish to make trouble.

These four celebrities were persons of varied accomplishments, and of considerable capital and industry, which they placed at the service of an appreciative public. The four were instruments of that fall which it is good divinity and common observation to believe cometh after pride of sapience. Wherever there gathered people whose confidence was greater than their discretion and who were willing to back their opinion, the four lent them every facility; thereby benefit-

## The Powers That Prey

ing them and forming them in the self-knowledge which philosophers declare is the beginning and the end of wisdom. The four were clever with their hands, had mastered in some of its most profitable applications the truth that motion may be quicker than sight, and drew a steady revenue from the desire of mankind to learn by experience. Their fellow-countrymen showed their appreciation of talents like these by first enriching the possessors, by private contribution, then from time to time by offering them public receptions at which speeches were in order, and by tendering them for a considerable period the hospitality of the State. It should in justice, be added, that every one of the four was of a retiring disposition and shunned these public attentions whenever possible.

This May evening in the "Slide" they had met by appointment in the way of business. Their business for the moment seemed to consist in the attentive contemplation of a calendar of local shows and festivals and generally of occasions on which anywhere in the United States in the next three months extraordinary crowds would congregate. At any expense of labor or of inconvenience to themselves they were ambitious to af-

## The Revenge of the Four

ford their services to the greatest number of people in the greatest number of places, in the shortest space of time possible. The question of the day was, in which part of the country and with what "graft" the benefit of their services should first be offered. The four had traveled widely and observantly, but not always in one another's company, and there were differences of opinion in regard to the territory most likely at once to receive them with due appreciation and to respect the modesty which disinclined them to public attentions.

Mr. Eady, called "Mike" among his intimates, and "Tier 4, No. 30,896" among his attendants at a mansion of more than monastic seclusion, facetiously known as his "lying-in hospital," favored a preliminary jaunt to a reunion of Civil War Veterans to be held in the South. He backed up the suggestion with promises of success, which, on account of his experience and age—he had just passed his fifty-sixth year—were listened to with marked attention.

"There's more suckers in a day down in that part of the country," he declared, "than there is up here in a week. We've all been in the hill country in West Virginia on circus days, ain't we? Well, the class o' people you find there are

## The Powers That Prey

runnin' loose all over the South. They take in 'bout one show a season, an' when they get to town they rubber so that they ain't thinkin' 'bout their leathers at all. W'y, I've seen those yaps come to town an' throw up their hands at sights that a Bowery kid wouldn't drop a cigarette snipe to see. Put 'em in front of a side-show's banners an' they'll screw their necks till you'd think they was never goin' to get 'em in shape again. They work like steers on their farms an' don't see enthin' excitin' more'n once or twice a year, an' when a big thing comes along it staggers 'em. The same class o' yaps is goin' to be at the reunion. I can see jus' exactly how the thing's goin' to be. Those old soldiers, you know, 'll come in from the country an' rubber themselves silly. They'll chew the rag right in a crowd, blockin' up the way an' makin' pushes so's a bloke won't need any stalls. Colonel Jim-Jams from Kentucky 'll see Captain Coffee Cooler from New Orleans, an' they'll beller.an' holler, an' han' round plug tobacco an' fine-cut right in a big jamb, an' Jim-Jams 'll suggest a mint julep. Then they'll push an' squeeze to get out o' the crowd, an' off comes the touch. You know the single-handed worker, Sneezy



## The Revenge of the Four

Johnson? Well, he told me not more'n six weeks ago that jus' such yaps as Jim-Jams an' Coffee Cooler stalled for 'im at a gatherin' in South Carolina better'n a trained push. 'W'y, Mike,' he says, 'I don't want nothin' easier 'n gettin' those people to bite. They're jus' like sheep. Let somebody holler that the elephants is comin' an' they crowd an' shove 's if they was bughouse. I was amongst 'em when Bryan struck Atlanta, an' it's God's truth, my hands actually got tired weedin' the leathers I pulled up.' Now, I tell you, blokes, we don't want to lose a chance like the reunion 'less there's somethin' a damn sight better somewhere else. It won't cost us over ten days to take it in, an' then we can jump West, or where you like."

"You're all right 'bout the yaps bitin', Mike," remarked Mr. Burras, familiarly known as "Larry," "but there's goin' to be an all-fired big push o' guns at that reunion, an' you know how those yaps are. They take the bait like catfish, but look out when the hollerin' begins. W'y, they nearly lynched Jerry Simpson an' the Michigan Kid in a jerk town in Georgia las' winter. The two was hittin' it up pretty lively, and an old hoosier woke up out o' one of his dreams while

## The Powers That Prey

the Kid's fist was in his pocket, an' he went bel-  
lowin' like a moose all over the shop. If the  
coppers hadn't jumped in an' rescued the Kid the  
yaps 'ud 'a' croaked 'im sure, an' it cost his push  
a thousand plunks to spring him from the cop-  
pers. There's goin' to be a big push o' visitin'  
coppers at the reunion, too, an' if any of 'em  
knows us they'll beef dead sure, 'less we square  
'em, an' they'll beef anyhow if the guns go it too  
strong, an' that's jus' what's goin' to happen.  
There'll be such a lot o' suckers that the guns 'll  
work 'em hard, an' there'll have to be a lot o'  
springin' done. My advice is—'course, if they  
ain't nothin' better—that we take in the through  
rattlers on the Pennsy or the Central for the next  
few weeks an' go it sort o' quiet like till we see  
how things are pannin' out. Them passengers  
on the through rattlers are always good for twen-  
ty-five or fifty, an' we can give 'em the change  
an' raise rackets. At night we can pull off some  
Pullman touches. I ain't stuck on this kind o'  
graftin', but it's my opinion that it'll suit us bet-  
ter'n the reunion will at this stage o' the game."

Mr. Renn, with the descriptive "monikey"  
Shorty, agreed with Mr. Burras that the reunion  
was impracticable, but for reasons which the oth-

## The Revenge of the Four

ers understood but did not seriously consider, favored remaining in town, and "taking in" such events as funerals until the season was more advanced. "Goin' to be some big stiffes to work at this month," he remarked appreciatively, "an' if we don't attend to 'em somebody else will—take my tip for that." Mr. Renn was engaged to be married to "a sweet little thing" on the East Side, and, as his companions well knew, was not competent to make acceptable suggestions.

Mr. Frood, affectionately termed "Eddie" by an indulgent wife, as well as by his three pals, proposed a jaunt through the great State of Ohio, and made good his reasons for the selection of this locality with very convincing arguments and illustrations.

"There's no use talkin', blokes," he said, "there ain't been no improvement on old Ohio in any State o' the Union. She's been touched up right an' left, backward an' forward, an' sideways an' crossways, an' there she sits still, sayin': 'Gimme some more, honey, gimme some more.' W'y, blokes, it's one o' the phenomenons o' the age, as Jimmy the Greek used to say, the way Ohio has been ripped open by politicians an' guns, an' keeps as chipper as ever. W'y, them

## The Powers That Prey

railroad junctions o' hers has been touched up for the last twenty-five years, an' they're as good as government bonds yet. Better, by Jove! I don't want any neater graft than floatin' 'round them junctions. An' I'd like to know where there's another State where you can fix things the way you can in Ohio. The politicians 'a' got the State by the throat, an' you know as well as I do, that where they get their graft in guns can too.

"Now's the time when the circuses begin their rounds, an' the thing for us to do is to jump over there, tie up with one o' the shows, an' jus' take its dates. I was over there last season with Myers an' Randall, an' we only had to make one spring, an' that didn't cost us over six hundred. By August we had six thousand plunks—even money—banked. We can't do any better'n that anywhere, an' I say that we hunt up a good sneak an' climber (sneak-thief and burglar) an' jump over there."

"Do you know what fixers are travelin' with the shows?" asked Mr. Eady.

"There ain't been any changes. I saw Cincinnati Red day before yesterday, an' he said the shows had the same coppers. Some of 'em has

## The Revenge of the Four

come up a little in their commission charges, but most of 'em are askin' twenty per cent. same as usual. Fifteen per cent. goes with some of 'em if you ain't on the dip, an' are jus' doin' the sure thing act."

This conversation took place in the inscrutable lipless enunciation of the profession. The night festival in the "Slide" was still at its height, and above all the sound of light laughter, of popping corks and shuffling feet, the voices of the three "darkies" proclaimed to the accompaniment of the three guitars, that they had got a horseless carriage an' a footman too, and yellow coachmen by the score; that they'd said good-by to all the coons, 'cause *we* ain't poor no more.

## II.

Adolph Hochheimer, mayor at this time of the city of Cornville, was a politician of the school whose first principle it is to let the people have whatever they want, provided always they want it badly enough to make a fuss about it. He was not one of those spurious republicans whose notion of political liberty is that every man be allowed to govern both himself and every one else according to the dictates of his conscience. He believed in the sacred right of the working majority to indulge in the particular shade of misgovernment to which they have a fancy and in the sacred duty of the minority to submit, without offensive partisanship except for campaign purposes. In the absence of so marked a preference on the part of the people that they are willing to make a fuss about it, he believed in the right of the governor to please his friends and in particular his most dearly cherished friend, which is himself. He had qualified himself in general for knowing what the people want by offering



## The Revenge of the Four

them for years the hospitality of his barroom; they wanted insatiably to pay infinite "nickels" for infinite glasses of indifferent beer which cost him half a cent apiece; they made it impossible for him to take the amount of rest allowed him in the early morning hours and on Sunday by an indulgent "license." His apprenticeship in high politics he began when he constructed his first block of tenement houses with thinner walls and less commodious apartments than the law commands: he was obliged to "square" the building committee. His serious studies he perfected during the period when he humanely rented his apartments to a class of people for whom the law commands that there shall be no abiding-place whatever. He was obliged to "square" everybody and keep them "squared," and they showed an equal facility in taking on the required shape and in losing it again.

As chief executive of the city of Cornville he had succeeded an incumbent who had been the candidate of a reform party. A reform party in the United States is usually an acute disorder of the body politic, a spasm or epileptic fit of virtue, very disagreeable to any one with a sense of dignity. A reform party that has elected its candi-

## The Powers That Prey

dates becomes a lingering disease, very disagreeable to every one whether he has a sense of dignity or not. In regard to a sense of dignity in the city of Cornville no positive statement can be made; in regard to its distaste as month succeeded month for political epilepsy as the rule of life it is difficult to make a statement too positive. The men of light and leading who had objected to other men's getting their little bills "jobbed" found it impossible to get their own little bills "jobbed": the case was intolerable. Mayor Renshaw was a Cato the Censor in every man's street, and no considerable body of human beings have ever professed a wish (and stuck to the profession) to be as good as Cato. Mayor Renshaw was so good as to be unpleasant and was the cause of an unpleasant goodness in others. Mayor Hochheimer was elected as the "regular" candidate, to the open rejoicing of almost every one, and to the concealed rejoicing of almost every one else, and the body politic resumed a condition of health. Every one found it possible to get his little bill "jobbed," and the new executive, out of whom hitherto, as a man of business, politics had made money, began to reap the harvest of his long studies and with perfect mastery made money out of politics.

## The Revenge of the Four

On the morning that the "Great and Only Combination Circus and Menagerie" was getting ready for the afternoon entertainment in the city of Cornville, a gentleman in the full-jeweled regimentals of a sport, but with a badge on his waistcoat which proclaimed him to be a private detective, called at the mayor's office in the town hall and asked for an interview with "His Honorable, Mr. Hochheimer." The interview was granted him.

"Good morning, Mr. Hochheimer. This is a pleasant day."

"Very pleasant, sir, very pleasant. Take a seat, sir. Don't know as I ever saw a pleasanter at jest this season of the year."

The two men made mental notes upon each other while these original courtesies were being exchanged. The private detective speculated on whether Mr. Hochheimer was "workable," and the mayor decided that the private detective was in a very lucrative business to be able to afford so impressive a uniform.

"I am the special officer, Mr. Hochheimer, of the 'Great and Only Combination Circus and Menagerie,' which is to show here this afternoon and evening, and I have taken the liberty of pre-

## The Powers That Prey

sending complimentary tickets to your chief of police, and am here now to offer some to you. We should be very glad if you would make use of the half-dozen in this envelope. We shall feel honored if you can find the time to visit the entertainments in person."

"Very kind, sir, very kind. I judge from the posters about town that you have a very attractive show."

"Yes, we offer the public a varied programme. I think I may say very varied, sir."

It is strictly to be noted that this exchange of commonplaces was not ineptitude: in the language of the prize ring it was sparring for an opening.

The mayor, who was approached in this manner on an average of twice a week, was perfectly aware that the circus representative's business was not yet transacted. He leaned back in his chair in an attitude of expectation.

"Mr. Hochheimer," the detective continued at last, "besides being the special officer of the circus company, I am also the business representative of some of the 'side-show' concerns connected with the circus."

"Jest so," said the mayor.

## The Revenge of the Four

“Exactly,” said the detective.

Whereupon both men looked a shade more thoughtful in order to convince each other that neither had the least inclination to smile.

“Among the ‘side-show’ interests which I represent are some amusing games which we are taking along with us this summer. We try to have novelties every year, you know.”

“Jest so,” said the mayor.

“They are harmless little games of chance, you know, at which the visitor to the show may take in twenty times his money, or maybe fifty times,” said the detective, who labored to be accurate.

“We run the games, you know, more to draw a crowd before the circus than anything else; it isn’t at all our notion to make money out of the games—except just to pay expenses; they’re, so to speak, a kind of advertisement. We thought,” concluded the detective, with childlike simplicity, “that we ought to explain this to you beforehand.”

“What is the nature of these games?” asked the mayor, also with childlike simplicity.

“Well, one is a variation of the old shell-game, that as a boy you doubtless yourself became acquainted with. Then we are experimenting with

## The Powers That Prey

a little wheel and a pea that we have been led to believe might entertain the boys. The pea goes skipping around, you know, and if it stops at the right place, the boy wins."

Here there was a really impressive pause. The mayor's face had become of a portentous gravity; he cleared his throat as if preparatory to the declaration of a moral principle.

"There are but two other matters in regard to which I need trespass upon your attention," said the astute middleman, who did not conceive it possible the mayor could at the moment have anything to say that would be to the profit of his employers. "It is the wish of the gentlemen who are handling the little games of which I speak to testify their gratitude to your charming town for the hospitality it showed them the last time they were here." This certainly demonstrated a Christian spirit on the part of two at least of his employers: the hospitality to which they had been treated on their last visit to Cornville had consisted mainly in a new and perfectly snug suit of tar and feathers. "They wish to distribute—a—five hundred dollars amongst your private charities, and would regard it as a great favor if you, Mr. Hochheimer, who can apply the



## The Revenge of the Four

money with so much more discretion than is at all possible to us outsiders, would take charge of the funds."

Here he produced a neat package which he laid on the desk before the mayor. The mayor's face assumed a look of extreme abstraction.

"The other little matter relates only to the subject of police protection. It is the policy of the 'Great and Only' to rely largely upon the local police for protection; paying liberally, of course, for the extra service they request. They find this policy more—more satisfactory to every one. I am about to speak to your chief of police on the subject, but thought it more courteous first to address you; particularly as it seems much simpler to make one arrangement for the protection of the grounds as a whole—the main show, the side-shows, and—well!—all the little booths that are set up along with the main show."

"Has the show taken out its license?" asked the mayor with the politeness of a man who can take in an idea, without having his skull cracked to make room for it.

"The license? Oh, yes, Mr. Mayor, the license is all right."

"I will consider the matters of which you

## The Powers That Prey

speak with the chief of police," said the mayor, with the grand air. The chief of police was the commander of fifteen patrolmen and one wagon.

"It is a pleasure to meet a gentleman who has had experience of affairs," said the polite middleman, rising to take his leave. "I was happy to see that you were put in office by a majority which promises a réélection."

"Hope your show will have every success," said the mayor; "hope you will have fair weather."

"To-day at all events is a pleasant day," said the detective.

"Very pleasant, sir, very pleasant; don't know that I ever saw a pleasanter at jest this season of the year."

### III.

There was still an hour to while away before the afternoon entertainment in the big tent of the "Great and Only Combination Circus and Menagerie" would begin. The parade had taken place in the morning, and the visitors to the show were gathering on the grounds. Since early morning they had packed the highways that converge at Cornville as the spokes of a wheel converge at the hub. Never before, except during the "Free Silver" presidential struggle, when the successful contestant had favored its people with a Pullman car platform speech, had the city contained such a motley collection. Crops were promising, the distinguished fellow citizen in Washington had promised "good times," the omnipotent stock-broker in Cleveland was backing the distinguished fellow citizen—and it is only once a year that the "Great and Only" visits Cornville. The "yaps" as Mr. Eady had called them, or if you prefer, the "backbone and intelligence of a great nation," as the President

## The Powers That Prey

had assured them he felt them to be, had passed a private resolution that for the time being their line fences could be "goll darned": they were going to take a day off. The four celebrities were present to lend the charm of surprise to the day off. Mr. Renn, who, on account of the "sweet little thing" on the East Side, had favored remaining at home and "workin' the stiffes," was playing his part behind the counter of a little booth to which he allured the backbone and intelligence of a great nation with cries of "Sixteen to one, gentlemen, sixteen gold plunks for one—if you choose the right color. It's a mere charity I'm offerin' you, jus' to advertise the clown in the show. Sixteen to one—beats Bryan hollow: step up, gentlemen, an' try your luck—sixteen to one!" The "sweet little thing" on Second avenue would never have recognized her beloved "Shorty" in the earnest exhorter beseeching the crowd to "take a spin on his wheel," which was the wheel of fortune. There was a fervor in his speech, and an intense look in his face, that, it is to be feared, the "sweet little thing" had never been favored with. The Under World makes love more or less as does the Upper World; like the Upper World also it

## The Revenge of the Four

becomes really in earnest when it makes money.

"Dodd gast that squirt of a wheel, anyhow! Soy, you, behind there, when am I goin' to win? You got five o' my dollars, an' I ain't won onc't." The words were deceiving and unnatural, but Mr. Eady's voice was the same in Ohio as in the "Slide." He was a better "tool" than "stall," as the Upper World knew to its sorrow, but "tools" have no function in sure-thing games, and he was doing his best to make the people "bite."

"Roll 'er again. I'll chance another; make or break; win or bust. The old woman'll dress me down, but shucks!—hard words don't lower the price o' eggs."

The wheel began to slacken its pace for the sixth time; the little pea lingered exasperatingly near the blanks; Mr. Renn made a slight movement with his foot; the pea moved slowly toward the winning colors. The wheel stopped.

"Here's your money, sir. See if it's right before you leave: ten fives an' three tens. Make room for the rest. Sixteen to one, gentlemen—if you choose the right colors. A mere charity I'm offerin' you, jus' to advertise the show; step up, gentlemen, don't let the grass grow on your

## The Powers That Prey

luck. Circus day comes but once a year. Don't push there. Take your time. Time's only thing cheaper 'n circus lemonade. The big tent don't open for an hour yet. Easy there, I tell you! You two fellows in front stop your shovin'."

Mr. Burras and Mr. Frood were leading the innocents to the slaughter. The innocents could hardly wait to be led; they jostled Mr. Eady aside before he could count his winnings, and fortune's wheel had made a number of turns by the time he broke through the surging mob and made his way to the rear to spur on those who still held back. It was "a hot time" such as the four celebrities had prayed for. "The hoosier pineth for eddication," Mr. Eady said, and the hoosier got it. The three "stalls" had to turn policemen and keep the crowd back, it was so eager to learn by experience. Dollars, in silver and paper, were thrust into Mr. Renn's hands with a rapidity which at times came very near making him forget to halt the fortunate pea at the losing colors. There was grumbling among the losers, but fatuity is infinite and inexhaustible in the ranks behind the first, and people in the rear elbowed those in front of them aside in their haste



## The Revenge of the Four

to benefit the eloquent Renn. Sixteen in exchange for one! and every man convinced beforehand of his natural and inalienable luck! Cornville did not come to its senses till a few minutes before the entertainment in the big tent began.

Then there were remarks more militant than consoling. "Mob 'em!" cried one indignant citizen who had sowed dollars and reaped wisdom and scorned it. The life of a celebrity is hard. There were even numbers of the crowd who suggested tar and feathers. But they reckoned without the Powers That Rule. "Clear the way here," commanded the chief of police at the head of an imposing squad sworn in for the day. "No crowding." Also the chief received ten per cent. of the net proceeds.

"But, Chief, we've been done," protested a bucolic chorus.

"Get out, you milk-skins; go in an' see the show!" and the chief whisked them aside.

"But, Shief," screamed a little German, "I vant mein money back. I loose two dollar. Dose fellows is slickers, I vant to tell you."

"Choke it off, Dutchy, you're excited. Take a run around the ring with the baby elephant."

## The Powers That Prey

“Bei Gott, I vill do noddings of de kint. I go straight to de mayor. Vill some off you beeples go mit me?”

The entertainment had begun, and the “beeples” were there to see it, but ten, who had lost heavily, agreed to accompany the German to the mayor’s office. They were not influential or prominent, but the majority of them were voters, and the mayor was amenable to reason when reason took the form of applied mathematics.

“Do you mean to say that they are running skin games—gambling—on the show grounds?” asked the initiated mayor.

“Bei Gott, dat’s vat I tell you. Von man, he tell me I get seventy dollar for two. Dot is a lie. Alzo I loose mein two dollar. Ven beeples loose money, dat is gampling!—in Chermannny, in Amerika, bei Gott! eferywhere.”

“Gentlemen, you surprise me; I will see that those games are stopped immediately. I am glad you called my attention to the matter. I have to thank you in the name of the city of Cornville. Good afternoon, gentlemen; it is upon such public-spirited citizens as you that every official who is interested in good government must depend!”

## The Revenge of the Four

The afternoon entertainment of the "Great and Only" was drawing to its close. The chariots were tearing around the big ring on the last lap; the spectators were getting ready to leave, and the performers for the "concert" after the "show" were peeking through the curtains of their dressing-rooms to see how many had been persuaded to wait for them to do their "stunt." The four celebrities and the gentleman in the full-jeweled regimentals of a sport—the "special officer" of the "Great and Only"—were in solemn conclave just outside the main entrance.

"The chief says the mayor has ordered the games shut down," said the special officer. "Told me to tell you't he'd have to make a pinch if you give the wheel another turn. It's all off."

"But we ain't even got our fixin' money back yet," objected Mr. Burras. "We'll be *losers* if we have to quit now." He threw an accent of really moral indignation into the word *losers*.

"Losers in a pig's eye!" exclaimed Mr. Frood. "If you'll stand for the dip"—and he gave the special officer a dig in the ribs with his thumb—"we'll get our dough back ten times over. How much commission have you got to have?"

## The Powers That Prey

"Seein' how things is runnin', I can't risk it under twenty-five per cent."

"Will you square the hollers?"

"If they don't holler too loud."

"Done!"

It was the crowd that was "done." Mr. Eady graciously consented to resume his old rôle of "tool," and the other three hummed the tune of the pickpocket's song:

"Oh, we are three stalls, *bums*  
Three jolly old stalls, *bums*  
We live like royal Turks;  
~~We're on the dip to win our chuck—~~  
To hell with the man that works!"

The band began to play, the flap of the main entrance to the big tent was thrown open, the crowd rushed out, and the four celebrities started "to do business."

So long as Cornville lasts and reminiscences are permissible the story of the business that the four did will be told and retold. It was a revenge which has become classic even in *blasé* gun circles. As Mr. Frood graphically put it, "The crowd was simply ripped open." When it had dispersed, and men went over the grounds to clean up for the rush and departure of the

*We nip a chuck when we're in luck*

## The Revenge of the Four

evening, the "weeded leathers" filled to overflowing a bushel basket. The Cornville public prints of the next day's issue estimated that three thousand dollars changed hands during the short space of time that the four were active. There was "beefing" galore, but the "Great and Only" folded its tents and stole away in the night, and the special officer squared no "hollers."

The life in the "Slide" was at its height. The three "darkies" were strumming their guitars and vociferating in chorus:

"I'se got a little baby, but she's out o' sight—

I talk to her across the telephone;

I'se never seen ma honey, but she's mine all  
right,

So take ma tip an' leave dis gal alone."

The room was full of smoke, the patrolman of the "beat" was getting his "eye-opener" at the back door, and the Salvation Army lassie in full uniform was ostentatiously vending her tracts. The four celebrities sat at their favorite table, drinking champagne. There had been toasts to Cornville, to Mayor Hochheimer, to the "Great and Only," and to the Crowd, and Mr. Frood rose to reply to "Ohio."

## The Powers That Prey

"The dear old State"—and he struck the Fourth of July orator's attitude—"may she keep her junctions open, cherish her fixers, never go back on guns, an' breed a fresh crop o' suckers every year!—Drink it down!"

*Chorus:* "Drink it down!"

And the three "darkies," under the inspiration of fate, which does things handsomely, struck into the chorus:

"Get your money's worth, I've had ma gin an'  
    feel mighty glad,  
Get your money's worth, an' have a good  
    time, but don' get bad,  
Get your money's worth, dance yourself clean  
    off the earth,  
If you want to have fun  
Bring your razor *an'* your gun  
    An' get your *money's* worth!"



## THE ORDER OF THE PENITENTS

### I.

A system of biology which proclaimed the flea a part of the monkey he lives upon would be regarded as at the least paradoxical. A company of gifted monkeys, competent to take a university degree and to misunderstand the doctrine of the origin of species, might possibly conceive the notion of isolating their parasites and maintaining them for a time in safety and comfort, in the hope that they would turn into monkeys themselves; but the notion and the gifted monkeys that conceived it would be ridiculous. At least that is the judgment of the scribes' common friend, the illustrious Minick. He goes so far, indeed, as to apply the analogy to a kindred science and to act upon his convictions, which is certainly to be reprehended. As near as can be gathered across his reiterated "you-see-blokes" and "savvy" and "you-hear-me's," his idea seems to be that in every considerable company of men there are

## The Powers That Prey

two organized societies, the society of the professional business man, and the society of the professional "crook," and that the latter society is literally a parasite upon the former. The point is that he regards the current theory of the penitentiary as a joke, and thinks any hesitation on the part of a member of the society of professional business men to take advantage of a professional crook as ridiculous as a hesitation on the part of an enlightened monkey to dine off his flea. The scribes, the illustrious Minick's common friends, do not go the length of approving his idea; far less do they think his idea can be made to justify his practice. They are scrupulously careful to hold no opinions that are not so nearly like those held by their neighbors that they may avoid scandal; but they permit themselves to record (and to condemn!) the opinions of the illustrious Minick.

This is the preface; what follows is the story. The result of the events narrated in it is, that Mrs. Minick, sometime Miss Sadie Meeker, declares in confidence that her next friends during her maidenhood, Margie Payne, who married a saloon-keeper, and Kittie Barwin, who married a part-owner in a dance-hall, are become dreadfully "common." That is not the word she used:

## The Order of the Penitents

what she said was that Margie always was a "slob" and that she (Sadie) had "done everything" for Kittie until she was just sick of it; but the meaning is the same. The Under World does not use the same idiom, but it manages to express the same meaning as the Upper. The illustrious Minick had money to invest and Mrs. Minick was meditating a residence in a less unfashionable quarter than theretofore, and a school for Sadie junior, aged six, in which "references" were required.

It is a matter of course that Mrs. Minick was the efficient cause of her man's prosperity. It is the theory in the United States that every good woman is at least that, and the scribes, who are scrupulously careful to avoid scandal, profess unbounded belief in that theory. Mrs. Minick "learnt" her man the virtues of diligence and self-denial; she put the screws on; in his own colloquialism, she made him "hustle for the dust."

The reasons why he should hustle were explained to him by Sadie with a clearness and determination to carry her point that gave Minick no alternative except to do as he was told. Minick's chief could not have been any more explicit in giving him a professional "steer."

## The Powers That Prey

“I want that apartment up in Harlem, and I want it furnished the way I told you,” declared Sadie. “We’ve been married over six years, and I’ve got tired of hearing what we’re going to do when you’ve got your pile. You’ve got a big enough pile now to get out of this floor where we’ve lived ever since our wedding-day. I want you to save money as much as you do yourself, but we’re not paupers, and I’m not going to live like one, and I’m not going to have Sadie grow up in a district like this. You know as well as I do that people who entertain a little and try to make an impression get on a great deal better than people who live all their lives in holes like this. Kit and Marge ’ll never amount to anything ’cause they don’t learn their husbands any style. It’s style that goes in this town, and we’ve got to get a move on. You let lots o’ chances to make scale go by. Only day before yesterday Curry from the Front Office was telling me that if he had your ‘front,’ as he called it, he’d be living near the Park in two years. Now, I want to live near the Park, and I want you to fix things so I can. You want to remember another thing too, Charley. If ever we do get on our feet properly, I want you to stop bringing those

## The Order of the Penitents

detectives up to the house. When Curry was here the other day, that lady that we got acquainted with at Asbury Park called, and the thing didn't go right at all. We can't mix up your business with my social acquaintances, and you want to remember it when we get up in Harlem."

"I notice you don't object to spendin' the money that my business brings in," Minick retorted not unsuccessfully.

"After the money is in my purse it's my affair where it comes from," continued Sadie with increased earnestness. "I ain't ashamed of being your wife, and I don't care who knows that you're a detective. But I don't propose to have the whole Front Office in my parlor when lady friends are calling on me. And if you'd only hustle a little harder, it wouldn't be long before you could quit the business. If you spent half the time in making money that I spend in hoping that you *will* make it, we'd be living near the Park in five years."

"Ain't I square with my money?" asked Minick. "Don't I divvy with you on the level?"

"I ain't complaining about what you do with the money you got; I'm simply telling you that we got to get more."

## The Powers That Prey

“ How much more do we need? ”

“ All we can get.”

There could be no doubt about this formula; therefore the illustrious Minick refused himself almost altogether the happiness of Sadie's companionship; the greatest token of affection a man can give a woman after marriage (not before!), being to see as little of her as possible and to hustle for the dust. The hours which, during the period of courtship, he had spent in “ jollyng ” her and in “ floating round ” with her, which are the two main categories of Under-World philandering, he devoted at present to increasing the “ scale ” of his job and to becoming “ wise.” The latter is a most exacting occupation and consists in nothing less than in getting and in keeping in touch with everything in the Under World. The pursuit of it brought Minick into companionship to which the fastidious Sadie, ambitious of Harlem, conceived a growing distaste, notably into the companionship of Gerald Noaker, Esq., mis-called “ Jerry,” official warden of a place of retirement which was very “ wise ” indeed, and of one Timlin and one Culp, official keepers in the nameless place of retirement, and of Thomas Burpee, Esq., and William Marts, Esq., two great per-



## The Order of the Penitents

sonages, who must have preferred striped clothes because they wore them, and of whom Timlin and Culp and even the great Noaker spoke in accents of reverence. Incidentally, Minick had been able, by his intervention with the warden, to do each of the great personages a favor: Burpee he had secured the much-envied privilege of a place in the pavilion for the insane, where the restrictions upon the penitents were less severe than in the shops; Marts he had got transferred from the smithy, where the labor is hard, to the feather-picking department, where the labor is non-existent, and had procured him a doctor's certificate which entitled him to delicacies of a sort at table. These things he did for a consideration in current Treasury notes; but a favor is a favor in the House of the Penitents, and Burpee and Marts, as became great personages, were grateful.

Incidentally too, the illustrious Minick was a special detective in the cab case of the A. A. & B. Railway. He made no progress in the case for some time, except in the matter of lengthening the expense account which the railway officials subsequently audited and allowed. He and Mrs. Minick took a little jaunt to Atlantic City, where they stayed a week till the "hot wave" passed and

## The Powers That Prey

till Margie and Kittie became spiteful with envy. The railway officials did not see the expenses of that trip in the account which they audited, but they were there. The railway officials were too much concerned about bringing the guilty parties to justice to show themselves difficult about details. The facts of the case as they appeared in the public prints at the time are these:

Harold Diprose, paymaster of the A. A. & B., was accustomed the first of every month to draw a considerable sum in the private office of Abbadie & Co., Bankers and Brokers, which he took up the line to be distributed on the different divisions. He was usually accompanied by one John Bladen, miscellaneous athlete and special officer not in uniform, by way of bodyguard. The evening before the robbery occurred, John Bladen fell into a conversation with two men of whom he could afterward give no description whatever, except that they had ill-kept sandy beards and rough, discolored hands, and were dressed in soft hats and untidy, loose-fitting clothes, considerably the worse for wear.

The next morning John Bladen was unable to present himself at the offices of the A. A. & B., and he stated later that he must have been given

## The Order of the Penitents

“peter-drops,” but in support of this statement he could give the officials of the A. A. & B. nothing whatever but his word.

When Harold Diprose left the side door of Abbadie & Co., Bankers and Brokers, that afternoon, he was so violently jostled by two stylishly dressed young men hastening toward a cab which stood in waiting for them, that he lost his hold for a moment on the small valise in which he carried his bank-notes. Both young men apologized profusely and one of them, whose high hat had toppled off in the encounter, stooped to pick it up, and offered also to hand Diprose his valise, of which, however, Diprose himself hastened to gain possession.

“I trust you are not hurt—very awkward in me I am sure,” said one of the young men, solicitously lingering.

“Not at all,” said Diprose.

“We were rushing to keep a date, but we did intend to take time to look where we were going,” said the other young man, bareheaded while he smoothed the nap of his hat with his coat-sleeve.

“I ought to have looked where I was going myself—as much my fault as yours,” said Diprose cordially. “If you stay to explain you will miss your date.”

## The Powers That Prey

“ Good afternoon,” said the young men together, and entered the cab.

“ Good morning,” said Diprose, and made his way to the offices of the A. A. & B., where he discovered that the small valise he held in his hands was not the same, except to the eye, as the small valise he had dropped on the pavement, and that the contents thereof were not the same, nor of equal value; and all of any consequence that he could remember of the two young men was that they both had sandy beards neatly trimmed and hands neatly gloved.

Therefore the illustrious Minick arrested John Bladen and let him go again, and arrested a cabman and let him go again, and the higher officials of the A. A. & B. employed friends and confidants of the illustrious Minick to keep Harold Diprose constantly in sight.

## II.

Two days after the adventure of Harold Diprose and the magic hand-bag, there was arrested in the streets of a city, which a courtesy toward, and even a regard for the safety of, their friends (and themselves!) inclines the scribes to keep concealed, a clean-shaven, stylishly apparelled, young man, known to the profession as Milly Matches, No. 20,547. His *nom de guerre* he had acquired in the years when he was learning his trade: he had disguised himself as a girl in the time of his slim, beardless youth and had sold matches on the streets and done other things less permissible. It was because of the other things that the number had been added to his name. He was committed for the moment to a local house of repose, and ultimately after certain tedious ceremonies to the refuge of the Order of the Penitents, of which the great Noaker was the official warden. The particular events which had led to his joining the Order of the Penitents had occurred some ten days before the adventure of

## The Powers That Prey

Harold Diprose and the magic hand-bag. Milly Matches had strolled into the main entrance of one of the principal theaters in the nameless city at a time between the second and third acts of the play, when the corridor was not occupied. He had presented his basket and a revolver at the ticket office and requested the man in evening dress behind the trellis to "shell out." The man afterward explained that he had thought of dodging and taking his chances, but he had a family and didn't have his life insured. Neither did he dodge; he shelled out.

"Good evenin' to you; it's a large, fine evenin'," said Milly Matches, and "mooched"; finding by a fortunate coincidence a horse and buggy near the theater entrance to assist him.

At the time when Milly Matches first joined the Order of the Penitents in the refuge of which the great Noaker was warden, the great Noaker was not fulfilling the duties of that office for his "health." The warden of such a refuge is commonly expected to find it or to make it a "good thing"; and deeply as the scribes deplore the facts, they are compelled in justice to state that he had paid for the opportunity. For the rest they permit themselves to record certain conver-



## The Order of the Penitents

sations and bits of narrative which came to their knowledge through their friend, the illustrious Minick.

Thomas Burpee and William Marts, the two great personages in striped clothes that Minick included in his list of distinguished acquaintances, were men whom he found very valuable to interview when there was an addition to the Order of the Penitents. Although they might not know the newcomer personally, if he had any real standing in Under-world society, they were pretty likely to be able to tell the degree of his distinction, and to estimate more or less correctly the probable amount of "fall money" it was reasonable to suppose he had at his disposal. In such matters the Under World is very much like the Upper: both worlds keep "tabs" on their celebrities, and the "A Number One Gun," like the millionaire, is classified in a "Social Register" and a "Who's Who."

It was the opinion of Thomas Burpee and William Marts, partially because they knew the class he belonged to, and partially because they had heard of some of his most recent enterprises, that Milly Matches was a penitent who would be glad to pay hard cash for mitigations of discipline.

## The Powers That Prey

Where the hard cash was, they did not attempt to state—the Under World is somewhat more respectful than the Upper of a man's private business—but that it would be forthcoming, if sufficient inducement were offered, they had no doubt whatever. Therefore Minick made haste to have an interview with the omnipotent and worldly-wise Noaker.

“You mean the man has the stuff?” asked Noaker, after Minick had told him of the reported financial status of Milly.

“That's what Burpee and Marts say.”

“It ain't hardly right for a man to have the stuff and not to learn the use of it. Seems irreligious like, an' a kind o' buryin' his talent.”

“Think Hell's Kitchen 'ud learn him?” Hell's Kitchen, in the speech of people who do not know what it means to work there, is the foundry. “There's a heap o' wisdom in a backache, if the back aches bad enough: bad enough an' just a leetle bit too bad, so's to set a man a-thinkin'; what do you say to the foundry? You must be short o' hands in the foundry.”

“I am always short o' hands wherever one 'll do me the most good; but see here, Charley, I'm sick o' driblets; there's as much risk in this busi-

## The Order of the Penitents

ness in a little job as in a big one, an' it's goin' to take a pile to get out o' that foundry or there's nothin' doin'."

Noaker found, as he expected, that he was short of hands in Hell's Kitchen, and to the kitchen accordingly Milly was assigned. The work prescribed for him was of the fittest sort to give him a backache "bad enough an' just a leetle bit too bad, so's to set him a-thinkin'."

One morning early, when he had had some days in which to do his thinking and, as Noaker said, "to get wise off his back," he was toiling with a white-hot bar of iron, when Timlin and Culp found it possible to stray past him and to linger a minute at his side. They had previously had a little chat with the astute Minick—which may have nothing to do with the case. The scribes know only that in Hell's Kitchen Timlin and Culp in their ordinary duties had no business whatever.

"Kind of a foretaste of bein' fried in yer own grease—ain't it, pard?" Culp ventured.

"Hot's hell and twic't as thirsty," said Milly, pausing a moment to scrape the perspiration from his face and arms with the edge of his hand. "Ain't got a gin fizz in yer jeans? I was jus' thinkin' I could use one."

## The Powers That Prey

The three men grinned, and a grin in the place of retirement of the Order of Penitents is a means of eloquent expression of more potency than an unabridged dictionary.

"Seem rather light for this kind o' work," Timlin dropped. "Did the deputy see you before you were put here?"

The question would have made a much less observing penitent than Milly look the two "screws" carefully over. They were not in the foundry for their health; and it is not the custom of "screws" to make inquiries in regard to how and why a light man was assigned to the heaviest work in a prison. He sized them up in the hope to read in their faces what their errand was. Timlin winked at him, Culp also winked.

"'Tain't none o' my business, but if it was me," said Culp to Timlin, "I'd take the first chanst I got to have a word with Minick, an' I'd talk business with 'im."

"I'd talk rocks," said Timlin.

"Rocks *is* business," said Culp.

And both men passed on.

The opportunity to have a word with Minick, Milly discovered in the prison garden one Sunday afternoon, when the penitents were free to receive their friends.

## The Order of the Penitents

"Say, boss," said Milly, abruptly, "I'm too thirsty for de foundry: I sweats more'n I kin drink: I'd like to shift."

"You are gettin' pretty white an' thin," said Minick critically; "but the Stir ain't no thoroughfare. I can't do nothin' for you."

"You kin try, I guess."

Minick did not admit explicitly that he could even try; he stood mute.

"Come," urged Milly, "I ain't in for no free show; I got the rocks."

"How d' you like the Insane Ward?" asked Minick.

"Name de price," said Milly.

Minick was much too "slick" to name a price or to name anything; but any man may ask a question!

"Could you raise five hundred?"

"Try me," said Milly; "though five hundred's stiff."

"Take it or leave it," said Minick; and there fell a silence for a while.

"Got to put up any looney spiel?" asked Milly.

"Possibly you had better," said Minick; and they discussed the looney spiel.

## The Powers That Prey

That evening Milly betrayed oddities of an astonishing kind and variety. He was laid off at the foundry, and within a week it was noised abroad that Hell's Kitchen would know him no more: he was "crippled under de hat." He was confined in the Insane Ward—which is a misnomer.

Thomas Burpee, too, was confined in the Insane Ward, and confidences in that ward are as inevitable as in the workshops and dining-hall; the only difference being a greater freedom of expression allowed to the penitents who are "crippled under de hat." Garrulousness is the inalienable right of the "bughouse"—if they have rocks. And the ease with which he had got out of the foundry set Milly a-thinking with almost as great lucidity as had the pain in his back.

"That bloke Minick straight?" he asked, one day, after he and Burpee had discovered that they were both only technically of unsound mind.

"How d' you mean straight?"

"Can he keep his clapper quiet?"

"If it's made interestin' for him, I guess. He's got his mit out like the rest of 'em."

"Case o' dough, eh?"

"That's my experience with him. He an' the warden graft together."



## The Order of the Penitents

"Ever known him to ditch any o' the guns in here?"

"Not when there was dough to be made."

"I guess him an' me 'll chew the rag."

. . . . .  
The conference took place in Milly's cell, where Minick called on him according to instructions delivered by a "trusty." There were very few prefatory remarks. The general principles of both were known to each, and it was only necessary to discover how many details the general principles covered.

"See here, boss, this is an A Number One shop an' all that, but confinement's bad for my health; what's the chance o' makin' a spring?"

This was a bold question for a penitent to put, but innuendo is not one of the habits of the Insane Ward.

"How much coin you got?"

This counter-question was not bold: Minick was playing with loaded dice; no penitent's word would ever be accepted in preference to his.

"Twenty-five thousand plunks. I'll give you half: take it or leave it."

### III.

One of the occupations in the retreat of the Order of the Penitents is the making of shoes. The time was when the workingmen of the State in which the retreat is situated demanded of their representatives at the State capital legislation that would make it impossible for the penitents to make shoes or anything else likely to compete successfully in the market with the manufactures of people in the open, it being obvious to any one that no penitent ought to be permitted to make himself useful. But the Insane Ward filled up legitimately at such a rate during this period of enforced idleness, that the authorities prevailed upon the legislature to make a compromise between its sense of duty and its humanity and to repeal the prison labor laws. The Insane Ward, in due course, became more or less normal again, containing only penitents who were indubitably not of unsound mind, and the order turned out shoes, brooms, cigars, and other necessities by the beneficent car-load.

## The Order of the Penitents

Six months after Milly Matches had demonstrated his sagacity by becoming an inmate of the Insane Ward, his mental condition was inquired into by the physician of the retreat, and it was decided that he was fit once more to do his task in the workshop. It was the physician's opinion that Milly's trouble had been merely an acute attack of melancholia, or hysterics, or an uncertain third somewhat comprehensively called "fits," or a combination of all three, and he said that Milly would in all probability serve the rest of his sentence—nine years—without a recurrence of the disorder. To the end that he might learn a trade which would relieve him of the chagrin of being a dependence on the public after his release, it was deemed advisable by the authorities that he be put to work in the shoe-shop, the cobbler's trade being notably a sedative to perturbed minds.

Milly had been in the shoe-shop some three weeks, under the surveillance of the indulgent Timlin and Culp, when he was reminded of a trade that he had learned in another retreat of penitents in another State. He began to study the possibilities of a shoe-box as a temporary place of residence. Contemplation tempted him to put his

## The Powers That Prey

ideas into practice, and he persuaded the gracious Timlin and Culp to employ him in the boxing department. He was left pretty much to himself in this work, and was able to make experiments. In about a week he was convinced that with a little squeezing a shoe-box carefully constructed might shield a man's body from rain and storm, at least until he was outside of the prison walls. This conclusion was, in itself, of no seeming interest to any one, least of all to the illustrious Minick, but Milly displayed a lively impatience to consult the illustrious Minick in regard to these ideas. It was just possible that the physician had been wrong and that Milly was still crippled under the hat. A bit of the dialogue between Milly and Detective Minick, when next they met, might have seemed to confirm the possibility.

"Can't nail the top on myself: I s'pose Timlin can do it unless he's forgot how to wink," said Milly.

Why he was not as fit as Timlin to drive a nail, and wherein remembering to wink was essential to that operation, did not appear.

"Timlin can wink," said Minick. Possibly Minick was "bughouse" too.

"An' stripes ain't pretty in the open—have you thought of that?" asked Milly.

## The Order of the Penitents

“I’ve thought of it.”

The two friends separated.

The following morning Minick entered the retreat of the penitents looking somewhat bulky, but no one challenged his right to enter; he was understood to be getting “wise,” and the Powers That Rule are permitted eccentricities in dress as well as in manner, when “wisdom” is the thing sought after. The season was not cold, but before leaving his lodgings to visit Milly it stands recorded that he dressed himself in two complete suits of clothes. A half-hour after his departure from the prison there was consternation among the employees at the freight-house of the ——— Railroad. Certain shoe-boxes from the penitentiary had been delivered, the teams had driven away, the workmen were about to load the boxes into the cars, when a crash of splintered wood was heard, and Milly Matches made an appearance from nowhere. The workmen were too dumfounded to do anything but stand with open mouths and stare, and Milly walked unconcernedly into the railway yards and was lost in the multitude of cars by the time the freight-hands realized that an escaped penitent had been among them. Had they watched closely they might

## The Powers That Prey

have noticed the illustrious Minick also in the neighborhood, keeping the man from nowhere carefully in sight. What they could not have seen unless they had given quick pursuit was both men entering a cab together and driving rapidly away. For the first ten minutes the cabby seemed perfectly to know where he was going. Later he received directions from Milly and drew rein at last at the edge of a wood, where both men alighted. When he had been dismissed Milly led the way to a bit of a lake by which there stood and stands an abandoned ice-house.

"Hustle now, Milly," said Minick, "I want the thing over before the Stir people are after you."

They broke open the door. Milly was taking desperate chances: he was still perfectly in Minick's power, and the instant he led the way to the hiding-place of his treasure he had played his last card. But even in the Under World the life of business is faith. Some one Milly was obliged to trust, and he preferred to trust Minick, who was, after all, an accomplice. The room was little and dim, and full of the smell of the dank sawdust and decayed wood that lay deep and soft underfoot. Milly went straight to one corner, where he kneeled and dug in the sawdust with his



## The Order of the Penitents

hands. At the end of a minute he lifted out a tin box wrapped in oilcloth, opened it, and displayed it full of packages of bank-notes. As he did so, Minick stooped swiftly and snapped a pair of handcuffs upon his wrists and drew a revolver.

"It's all off, Milly; you're the bloke that pulled off that A. A. & B. touch. If you'd had that dough you'd never 'a' touched the theayter, and between the time of that get-away and the A. A. & B. get-away there wasn't anywhere else a graft o' this size. I'll be on the level with you: there's bills in them packages can be identified: I've got you dead. But I'll give you a chanst. There's a lot bigger stake in this for me than your twelve thousand: I want the name of your pal; an' you can lay to it I'm goin' to have it. Out with it; who was he? It's your one chanst: take it or leave it: and be quick about it."

Milly's face was not good to look upon; but neither was Minick's.

"You're puttin' up a damn big bluff; you don't know what I'd touch an' what I wouldn't, nor where I got my pile."

"If the bills can't be identified and the fellow you touched—Diprose—won't swear to your mug, I'm ditched. I gamble I'm not. You can take it or leave it."

## The Powers That Prey

"Will you let me mooch if I tell you, with my half of the stuff?"

"Sure!"

"Shorty Hoolan."

"Thanks," said Minick; "you're easy. Now we'll go back to the Pen. Steady there, you idiot."

Milly had given an inarticulate cry of rage and made a break for the door. Minick caught him and beat him into a sitting posture with the butt of his revolver—once—twice—about the head.

The bills were identified and Harold Diprose did swear to Milly's mug. Shorty Hoolan was taken into custody some weeks later; and once more the public prints pronounced Detective Minick a second Old Sleuth and Sherlock Holmes. What was of more consequence both to Detective Minick and really to the future execution of the law, there was a thrill of pride and pleasure in the bosom of Mistress Sadie, who, by the way, received in the public prints no credit whatever.

"I told you what you could do if you'd only hustle for the dust," she said: "please, Mr. Old Sleuth—hustle some more!"

## THE PRISON DEMON.

### I.

Until comparatively recent years the official Vergil who conducts visitors through the great ——— Penitentiary was wont to call attention to a wooden door in the basement of one of the prison buildings. It was his sacramental custom to wait until the visitors were very close to the door before explaining to what inferno it led. When the eyes of every one were directed to the padlock by which the door was secured, he would say, in a voice charged with mystery: "On the other side of that door, ladies and gentlemen, lives Harvey Jeliffe, the Prison Demon." And having paused to allow his words their full effect, he passed gravely on and artistically heightened the curiosity which he had aroused by declining to satisfy it. "We will now pass," he said, "into the laundry department."

It sometimes happened that one of the Powers That Rule arrived at the penitentiary, and ex-

## The Powers That Prey

pressed a wish to see the inferno in all its details. Again the official Vergil led the way to the wooden door, but with a marked difference of manner. He had received very definite instructions to show the "gentleman" everything. Arrived at the door, he said nothing about the Prison Demon; he said simply: "Would you like to see him?" An affirmative answer caused to be unlocked a series of doors which, when opened, partially revealed, still behind bars, one of the celebrities of the Powers That Prey.

The celebrity's willingness to talk depended wholly on the mood he happened to be in. The most successful ruse to betray him into conversation was for the guard to say: "Harvey, here's a friend from Catamaran county." Unless busied with a "turn" at his calisthenics or fretted about the darkness of the day having diminished the light in his cell, which was never sufficiently penetrating to allow a spectator to see more than the bare outlines of the man when he sat on his bed, he generally took advantage of the invitation to show himself, and walked over to the visitors' side of his dungeon.

"From Catamaran county, are you?" he would ask. "Well, that's a damn sight better

## The Prison Demon

county 'n this. I ain't kickin' though. All they can do to me is coop me up an' I can stand on me head 'f I like. They don't dare come in here an' let me finger 'em over. I can do up the whole push of 'em. I'd like to squeeze that guard's throat now. Say, you old walnut-head, open up the doors an' gimme a chance to be affectionate, will you?" At close range he did not look strikingly like a demon. It was difficult, on account of the bars, to have a satisfactory view of him, but with the exception of his extraordinarily piercing brown eyes, he gave the impression, both in conversation and manner, of being an ordinary prisoner. A well-built body and general muscular appearance suggested good health, and his complexion was not much worse than that of his less closely confined fellow convicts. At the time of his imprisonment in the underground cell he was about thirty-five years old.

On all occasions when a privileged visitor was taken to see Jeliffe the official explained a little how Jeliffe lived.

"He spends hours every day in gymnastics," he would say. "He is one of the strongest men I ever had to guard. If you ask him why he

## The Powers That Prey

takes so much exercise, he says: 'I'm tryin' to keep my mind above my body.' He means that he is trying to keep strong. Although he has been in that cell for over ten months at a stretch, he can still do up any three ordinary men. Oh, he's a phenomenon all right. No doubt about that."

Harvey Jeliffe had not upon his first entrance into prison been the Demon of the place; he had been a most exemplary penitent. Later he had committed a murder in the prison itself and had escaped the death-penalty only by a surmise, to which he himself refused in the least to assent, of insanity. It had been plain both to judge and jury that a man with but a short term still to serve, who committed a murder that must be brought home to him, could not be wholly of sound mind. When he got a life-sentence he promised openly "to do for" the warden, and that is *lèse-majesté* and half a dozen other heinous things, besides being foolish. In the meantime while the warden showed respect for his own skin by keeping out of the way, Harvey kept himself in practice by knocking the "screws'" heads together and miscellaneously spoiling them, for weeks after they had passed through his



## The Prison Demon

hands, for a visit to their sweethearts. Therefore, as was but reasonable, he had been scientifically paddled, subjected to hot water in immoderation and to electricity, and strung up by the wrists for thirty-six hours, as a modest minimum, at a stretch. When he had proved after these delicate attentions that he really did not understand kindness, he was pronounced by the warden, and became, the Prison Demon, and was dealt with as such.

. . . . .  
In connection with the "Harvey Jeliffe Case," as it is sometimes called, there appeared not long ago in the public prints a paragraph entitled "An Experiment in Penology," which read thus: "The warden of the ——— Penitentiary has had built a very remarkable cage in which are to be confined two prisoners who have heretofore been an expense to the State, which it is hoped the innovation will very considerably reduce. One of the prisoners is the well-known professional criminal Harvey Jeliffe, popularly called The Prison Demon, and the other is a murderer who, if not so inherently irreclaimable as Jeliffe, has had to be confined in a separate cell guarded by extra prison officers. The plan is to put these two

## The Powers That Prey

men into the cage, and, if possible, to make them work. Whether they work or not, however, it is believed that imprisonment in the cage is the most fitting punishment to be meted out to such fiends. It was suggested to the warden that the two men might turn upon each other and do grave harm, but this possibility does not seem to give the warden great concern. He said in regard to it that if the men actually killed each other, he was not sure that that would not be the best solution of the problem. To the layman this form of execution cannot but seem irregular, to say the least, but it is a question deserving of very serious consideration by both specialists and laymen whether it would not be wise to put such wretches out of the world by process of law."

Since the publication of this paragraph there have been a number of public statements by professorial criminologists, who have examined Jeliffe in regard to his degree of degeneracy, and the consensus of opinion among them is that physically as well as mentally he is a pronounced type of criminal abnormality. They consider him the kind of criminal that Professor Lombroso suggests might fitly be put out of the world. They see no hope whatever of reforming him,

## The Prison Demon

and do not hesitate to offer his case as proof of the need of legislation which will permanently rid a community of men of his stamp. The prisoners in the penitentiary where Harvey Jeliffe is confined also have comments to make on his case, but there is a very decided difference between their remarks and those of the criminologists. They do not accept the notion that Jeliffe is a degenerate; the majority of them believe that from the time he was first sent to the underground cell until the present moment he has acted exactly as they would have acted under similar provocation. That the world calls him a "demon" is evidence of ignorance on the part of the world, which they can only laugh at. But what can be expected of men publicly convicted of crime? This question is rhetorical, which is to say it is not to be taken seriously.

At the time that a professor of criminology was conducting his university *Seminar* through the prison in order that his students might see in the flesh some of the monsters he had described to them in the lecture-room, a convict by the name of Jervis Harpson made a statement to a group of fellow prisoners in regard to Jeliffe, which is representative of the opinion concerning

## The Powers That Prey

him among the more enlightened Powers That Prey.

“ ‘Course these college blokes think Harvey’s bughouse,” he said, “ ‘cause they ain’t next. I’ve known Harvey ever since he struck the turf. I knew him when he was only a kid travelin’ with that Western mob of grafters. The fellow’s a wise one—dead wise. But he’s got a grouch on. I don’t know the whole o’ the details, but I know enough of ’em to understand that it’s a case o’ grouch an’ not bughouse.”

## II.

In the life that preceded his time of bondage Harvey Jeliffe was not a man who coveted, or indeed who gave great occasion for, commiseration. He did that which seemed pleasant in his own eyes, and what his heart lusted for he took and kept with a strong hand. In particular his heart had lusted for Nettie Rix, and he had taken her from her father and her brothers by dint of his strong hand in their faces in what the neighborhood called a "mix-up," which occurred when he proposed for her. To be sure his proposition was somewhat sudden and was not couched in accents that could in the least be called typical of the lover's whining, wheedling deference toward the guardian dragons of his beloved. He had said with Homeric simplicity, after having listened to the family protest against their main wage-earner being removed: "You can stow that gas for all me: Net an' me is goin' to flit right now. If y' ain't dead set on bein' sorry to part with her, y' can git away from

## The Powers That Prey

that door. If y' don't git away, I'll walk t'rough y' and it might dis-regulate y'r insides." It was then that the "mix-up" had occurred: Harvey had "walked t'rough" Nettie's male kinsmen, at all events greatly to the discoloration of their outsides, and quite literally had brought away his bride. He had not beaten her since more nor oftener than she needed: she herself stood ready to testify to this with every outward accompaniment of rage the instant she heard him accused; and she surely ought to know how often and to what extent she was in need. Nettie was more than a little good to look upon, and it is possible that her tolerance was great because no matter how heavily he struck her Harvey was careful never to disfigure her face. They had one child—Blanche—of whom they were both devotedly fond.

Detective Ackeray was not given to what the young lady novelists would call assorted sentiment. He had heard members of the officially gentler sex cry out insults to which nothing but a good drubbing is an answer, and that an insufficient one; and had seen women tantalize a man to deal the blow which would dishonor him, until from the point of view of a member of the force



## The Prison Demon

he thought the blow had been earned and ought to be delivered. "A lady that ain't a lady and can't act like a lady, don't deserve to be treated like a lady," he had once been heard to declare, between his teeth, as he bundled a bonnet and skirt et cetera roughly into a patrol wagon. To be sure, the exasperation had been extreme: the bonnet and skirt had behaved more as if they contained a large member of the cat species than a woman, and one side of Detective Ackeray's face had been laid open in broad bands from eye to chin. The point is, however, that Nettie Jeliffe did act like a lady, according to Detective Ackeray's standard at least, and that he once happened to be present when Harvey Jeliffe was executing a bit of matrimonial discipline, and threatened to "run him in."

The discipline was being given in the street, and Ackeray would not have been a fly cop had he not believed it to be his right to take a hand in all street happenings. Harvey believed it to be his right to administer any chastisement that he thought his wife needed wherever it proved most convenient.

"This 's my circus," he said defiantly, when Ackeray threatened to "pinch" him. "You

## The Powers That Prey

rubber too much with y'r neck, you do. If you can't do anythin' better than mix yourself in family affairs, why I'll help you to get over the habit."

"I tell you those too," Nettie declared, boldly championing her husband's right to bring her up according to his best light. "If you fly cops 'ud take care o' your own fam'lies the way you try to take care of other people's, you'd save more money. You're an old woman, that's what you are. I wouldn't be found dead livin' with you." "Sock it to him!" "Hit him where he lives!" "Kick him out o' the street!" bystanders suggested; and Nettie was emboldened to continue her "roasting."

"You jus' try to pinch my Harvey," she went on. "W'y, you long-legged, leather-headed, Front-Office stiff, I'd rather have my Harvey kick me reg'lar every mornin' than drink a bottle o' sham with you every night. You go home an' see 'f your own wife don't need a little trouncin'."

Detective Ackeray was not hurt by the frankness of Nettie Jelffe's speech; neither did he find that it lessened her "ladyship." On the contrary, he was old-fashioned enough to think a generous

## The Prison Demon

lie a grace in womanhood and that a family quarrel is a sacred function so long as the family stands ready to present a united front against the intervention of an outsider.

“Long-legged, leather-headed, Front-Office stiff” is not a hackneyed term of endearment, and if Nettie Jeliffe had been searching for a phrase by which to recommend herself to Detective Ackeray’s esteem, she might not have hit upon it. His taste, however, was mature and sound: he did not mind hard words; they do not lacerate the flesh; he minded only bonnets and skirts with feline-fiendish contents; and it stands recorded that whereas before Nettie Jeliffe had ridiculed him he had pronounced her a “clipper,” after she had ridiculed him he pronounced her emphatically a “corker.” No very definite ideas are attached to either of these words, but they both express admiration, and “corker” is more nearly extreme than “clipper.” Later Ackeray was heard to say, “That little woman is too good for Jeliffe,” and to declare that he would do her a good turn some time if he saw his way. He was not a man to split hairs about what he thought a good turn, and what she would think a good turn: if she did not know what was good for her, he did; it was not good for her to be

## The Powers That Prey

beaten. When he arrested Harvey "on suspicion," in connection with the housebreaking in Rishworth Place, she cried more bitterly than at any time when she had received a beating: she took her beatings for the most part in haughty silence. When he succeeded in convicting Harvey, altogether on circumstantial evidence, and in obtaining a sentence of four years, she cried still more bitterly. That was as it should be: he liked her the better because she stuck to her man. The farewell between husband and wife was neither heart-breaking nor prolonged, but it was "on the level."

"Take care o' the kid, Net, old girl," Harvey said. "I'm innocent all right 'nough, but there ain't no need for the kid to know where I am."

"I'll visit you reg'lar every visitin' day," promised Nettie, at the time really intending to keep her promise. "Remember an' make good time, an' don't get into any rows. I'll take care o' Blanche, so you don't need to worry. You'll write me, won't you?"

"Sure."

"Kiss me good-by; y' ain't kissed me since Blanche's last birthday. So-long, Harvey!" And the train and Harvey started for the Stir.

. . . . .

## The Prison Demon

If Detective Ackeray had been a mere private citizen and not a prince, or rather a princeling, he must in mere decency have forborne for some time to express his admiration for Nettie Jeliffe. The customs of an aristocracy are more direct; the business of a prince, and even of a princeling, require haste, and their substantial power makes haste possible. Courtship in the given circumstances was difficult, but courtship in the given circumstances is always difficult, and there are no circumstances whatever in which women have not been wooed and won. Detective Ackeray began his courtship on a street-corner and continued it in a station-house. He had deprived her of a protector who did not protect: he wished to provide her with another who would; he had not hunted down Harvey out of malice; it had been his business to work up such evidence as there was, and he had done his business and got his reward, and the prosecuting attorney had done the rest. These things he told her roundly, with a manly straightforwardness that should have touched the heart, or the imagination or fancy of any woman. When, instead of listening to him, she reviled him, with feminine finish, point, and fluency, before a gathering crowd of

## The Powers That Prey

chaffing auditors, he proved himself a man to be depended upon in an emergency, one of the strong dumb souls Carlyle and Ruskin used to celebrate as natural leaders and governors of men: he promptly placed her under arrest as drunk and disorderly. The next morning in court she sufficiently demonstrated her disposition to disorder by treating his honor with an alternate haughtiness and eloquence which made the audience behind the rail titter and the double bench of bluecoats shake with involuntary mirth. The bailiff cried "silence" and threatened to clear the court; his honor passed sentence of ten dollars or ten days; Detective Ackeray paid the fine.

In the corridor of the magistrate's court he gave Nettie what he would have been pleased to call "professional" advice. "See here, Net, the next time 't I chew the rag with you about cuttin' up in the streets an' boozin', you want to listen—see?"

She did not listen the next time, nor the time after, though it need not be doubted that she was impressed—yes! and subdued and attracted—by the might and decision of the prince. She had loved Harvey, mainly because he had vanquished



## The Prison Demon

her kinsmen, and a little because he had beaten her as often as she needed it and not oftener. In equal logic she ought to have loved the prince, mainly because he had vanquished Harvey, and a little because, if he did not beat her to silence her tongue, he had discovered a method of procedure which much more nearly silenced it than anything that Harvey had ever done; and the strong point of every woman is logic—the women in their conventions and clubs say so. But the second strong point of every woman is her gift for concealing her logic. Nettie Jeliffe concealed hers, so far at least as Detective Ackeray was concerned, as long as in all human endurance a woman could. She became an old offender in the several magistrates' courts in the district throughout which Detective Ackeray had authority. The charge was always drunk and disorderly, and the complainant always Detective Ackeray; and sometimes as the months passed she had been drunk, and she had always been disorderly. She could not go back to her kinsmen—her mere presence reminded them too vividly of an unpleasant incident, or coruscation of incidents, which had taken place at the moment of her departure. She could not retain a position

## The Powers That Prey

even when she got one, because of the frequency with which she was under arrest; and besides, the fact that she was Harvey Jeliffe's wife was not commonly regarded as a recommendation. Ackeray paid her fine, or let her pay it herself or work it out, as a jockey might gentle or punish a spirited horse which he took a pride in training. Whether he paid her fine or not, he always repeated to her that the next time he tried to chew the rag with her she had better listen—*see?* Her absences from home and her proved intemperance made her an improper guardian for little Blanche. When the child was taken away from her, also at the instigation of Detective Ackeray, Nettie Jeliffe listened.

Three months afterward she was legally and absolutely separated from Harvey and was married to a man whom she addressed sometimes as "George," sometimes as "dear," and little Blanche, who was restored to her home, was outspoken in her approval of her new papa. Detective Ackeray was "George." He was also dear.

### III.

It has been remarked in the first part of this tale that Harvey Jeliffe on becoming a penitent in the great ——— Penitentiary, had no notion or intention of ever bidding for the notoriety that has come to him in later years as the Prison Demon. He went to the Stir originally with the idea of getting all the “good time” that the law allows a man who has been sentenced to four years, and of keeping out of all rows as his wife had advised. He did that which all wise men who are sent to prison do: in the language of the pugilist, he gathered himself together. Men who go to prison for the first time have more difficulty in achieving this feat than those who have been there before, but to live at all successfully—and even prisoners have their standard of success—all must sooner or later hit upon a plan by which they are to deal with their guards and fellow penitents with as little friction as possible. Even with the most careful there are moments when they entirely forget their philosophy and do

## The Powers That Prey

things which in the open they would never have been guilty of. Long confinement will disturb the mental equilibrium of any man; but all must struggle, and do struggle, to live as unobtrusive lives as under the circumstances are possible.

Harvey Jeliffe, on arriving at the great ——— Penitentiary, knew with a certainty which would have made some men commit suicide, that he was innocent of the crime for which he had been convicted; but he knew also that it was no use to let this fact govern his policy as a prisoner. It was not for him to ask the prison world how or why his conviction had come about; it was for him to be an exemplary convict. And so, wondering all the while how things were going “on the outside,” and continually struggling with an impatience at the way the world is made, he worked hard for two years and nine months to get a “good-conduct” reduction of his sentence. There remained but a few months more of confinement, and they were to be the least irksome of all because Harvey had climbed the heights which lead to the eminence of a “trusty”; he had become the errand boy of the prison doctor, and was sent on commissions to all the different departments. One day, while on an errand to the

## The Prison Demon

glove department, he met an old acquaintance who had recently been committed to the institution, and he asked him for news of the "outside."

"How is the push comin' up?" he queried, referring to his old "pals." Some were "settled" (in prisons like himself), he learned, others were dead, and still others were operating in new fields.

"What's the matter with Net? I ain't heard anythin' from her for two years."

"Ain't no one put you next?" the newcomer counter-questioned him.

"Next to what? She ain't dead, is she?"

"No, she's live an' kickin' yet, but that fly cop Ackeray has tied up with her. They're married."

"Where's the kid?"

"She's livin' with Ackeray too. Calls him papa."

A guard appeared just then, and the conversation was broken off. It had been successful, however; Harvey had wanted "news," and he had got it. There were other trips to the glove department to secure the details of the story by word of mouth, but his own imagination had patched them together for him after he had

## The Powers That Prey

learned the main fact, which was that Ackeray "had done him dirt." The unmerited conviction and imprisonment became for him now part of a general scheme to "ditch" him. The injustice of the punishment had troubled him and made it hard to obey the rules, but he had conquered the temptation to be unruly. He had been puzzled by Nettie's refusal to write, but he had not connected Ackeray with her neglect of him. In an indefinite way he had planned some day to settle accounts with Ackeray for the part he had played in his (Harvey's) misfortunes, but the thought of ways and means had not captured his mind; that could be attended to after he had secured his reduction of sentence. Had he been "outside" even the news of Ackeray's theft of his wife and child might possibly have been as reasonably considered as had been the conviction that he was unjustly a prisoner. Men of Harvey's stamp are much calmer in the open than in the Stir, and marriages and divorces take on no such final proportions. It had taken all of Harvey's good sense, however, to be a model penitent, and the complete revelation of Ackeray's duplicity fired him with a desire for revenge. Henceforth his one passion was to meet Ackeray.



## The Prison Demon

He still remained a "trusty"; good behavior had become automatic with him; but his ambition was no longer simply to be released. He spoke to the warden and the guards of his wish to have a talk with Ackeray. He said that there was a suspended sentence hanging over him in another court and he wanted to know if Ackeray would be willing "to fix things up for him."

"He's the only fellow that can straighten the matter out," he explained to the warden, "and I want to have a talk with him."

"You're afraid you'll be arrested on being turned loose from here, is that it?" asked the warden.

"That's exactly it," said Harvey, "and I think if Ackeray 'll go to the front for me, I won't be bothered."

"All right. Ackeray's goin' to bring some prisoners here in a day or so, an' I'll let him know."

Three days later Detective Ackeray arrived at the great ——— Penitentiary with a batch of penitents, for whose bodies he was given a receipt by the warden. He was informed of Harvey's desire for a talk with him, and was immediately impressed with the importance to himself of such

## The Powers That Prey

a talk. Possibly he might find it to his advantage to arrange matters so that the alleged suspended sentence should be carried out.

"Sure, I'll see him," he said to the warden. "Where is he?"

"You'll probably find him over in the doctor's office. Take him into the garden if you want to be private, and tell the doctor I said it would be all right."

The meeting took place in the doctor's office. The doctor was in another part of the prison, and Harvey had been left in charge. No one heard the conversation between the two men, and only two of the guards knew anything about their being together. Whether Harvey made use of his "suspended sentence" story, or charged Ackeray immediately with foul treatment of him, has never been decided. The two men were in conference, according to the testimony of the guards, about half an hour, and it seems reasonable to suppose that Harvey could only have interested Ackeray this length of time by reference to the suspended sentence; but in view of what happened one is justified in wondering why he should have wanted to interest him at all. Harvey himself has persistently refused to make any

## The Prison Demon

statement one way or the other. When the doctor returned to his office Harvey was found sitting in a pool of blood on the floor, cutting into small bits with a surgeon's knife the heart of Detective Ackeray, who lay dead and mutilated in a corner of the room. At the trial it was reported that Harvey had mumbled to himself as he cut, "So much for so much; for that and for that"; but no intelligible interpretation of these expressions could be discovered, and they were eventually accepted as contributory evidence of his insanity.

## THE GREAT IDEA.

### I.

It is not for an instant to be supposed that the Great Idea was possessed in the beginning by Ruderick in the grave magnitude and symmetry in which it ultimately stood revealed. He conceived at first only the vague outline and worked in the details afterward as occasion served. But it is to him and not to Judge Barwood that the credit of the Great Idea belongs.

Be it known that in the city of Cornville Judge Barwood, before he went to Congress, was the predecessor of Mayor Renshaw, who was the predecessor of Mayor Hochheimer, whose story has been touched upon in the tale of the Four Celebrities; and that in Mayor Barwood's day Ruderick and his clan held carnival and Adolph Hochheimer became a personage. The populace indulged its taste, which is strong waters and late hours, to the utmost. Every man did that which seemed right in his own eyes, as the doctrine of

## The Great Idea

liberty, duly misconstrued, commends; and the majority, which is the populace, ruled, as in the mathematical theory of republicanism, which estimates men not according to their value but according to their number, the majority should rule. Therefore Herbert Renshaw, Esq., who believed in his divine right to govern himself and all men else according to the dictates of his conscience, and Richard Englar, Esq., who believed in his divine right to see himself and all men else governed in the interests of his bank, and Edwin Cowles, Esq., who had an ancestor (one only it seemed), and who had been to college and learned that it is every man's civic duty to take an interest in the government of the Great Democracy whether he is fitted to do so wisely or not:—these three, their associates and abettors, constituted themselves a Power and a Party and used the letter of the institutions of the country to defeat, confound, exasperate, enrage, enfrenzy the spirit of them. They drew up and caused to be printed in the newspapers an insidious, deceptive, Jesuitical declaration of principles, miscalled a platform. The gist of which principles was personal purity in public office, an honest count in elections, an administration without fear or favor

## The Powers That Prey

of the existing law. What the men who drafted that document meant really was that they were not republicans at heart, and found the preferences of the majority hateful and intended to take advantage if possible of a momentary discontent on their part with Mayor Barwood—a mere passing fit of the spleen—and to make the majority forego its preferences, in some respects at least, until it got another chance to change the city officers and city ordinances; whereas everybody knows that the city ordinances and the State statutes and the letter of the law generally are provisions for extreme cases, are intended not so much to be enforced as to strike would-be transgressors with the fear which begets moderation and discretion, and that for any government to take the people at its word is to defeat its will by mere chicanery. If we cannot say one thing and mean another without being misunderstood, a government of the people by the people for the people must become impossible or cynically and even degradingly veracious. Amongst the indispensable preliminaries to true delicacy of nature is the proper lie stated, and not believed but acquiesced in, at the proper time.

Be it known also that the city of Cornville



## The Great Idea

lies in the midst of a great town and country population who are immaculately good, except when they go to Cornville on a visit. They think it manners to do in Cornville as Cornville does. Also they find manners in this case delightful. It would not be polite to suggest that these things are exemplified in any other spot the precise location of which is less doubtful than that of Cornville, and it is respectfully requested that no suggestion of the kind be discovered here; what the scribes wish to assert is no more than the undeniable fact, which could be proved in a court of law, or even in a very different place, at the bar of heaven, that the inhabitants of the fields and hamlets surrounding Cornville were fortunate in their opportunities and even in their necessities. They could despise their neighbors, they could be respectable at home, they must indeed leave home to receive any considerable aid from without to be disrespectable. Therefore the Under World was iniquitously encouraged to acquire vested interests in the city of Cornville, and the city of Cornville itself was iniquitously held responsible for naughtiness that "pillared" temples in the hamlets of virtue, and that held the plow in the meadows of innocence. There-

## The Powers That Prey

fore there was honest indignation in the Under World when Herbert Renshaw, Esq., became a candidate for mayor, and the Powers That Rule met as one man to oppose his election. There was a moment when it seemed they might count on the undivided assistance of the Powers That Prey, but fate had decided otherwise. Fate was Ruderick and the Great Idea.

Be it known that at the time Herbert Renshaw, Esq., announced himself a candidate for the office of mayor of Cornville there were three bad men in the municipality who traveled and transacted business under the names of "Fritzie" Gannes, "Soapy" Wadlow, and "Frenchy" Latane. In the class beneath Ruderick MeKlowd they were the greatest and most envied Under-World celebrities living in the community. "Fritzie" was a gamester from London, England, who betted when he knew beforehand that he could not lose because he had fixed things that way. "Soapy" was a "tool" from 'Frisco, who could "reef a leather" in a driving rain and gale of wind, and "Frenchy" was a "stall" from Quebec, who was a crowd in himself and could create a push and squeeze on an open prairie, if the victim marked for the dip should take refuge

## The Great Idea

there. He could arrange a "frame-up," and relieve "Soapy" of the stolen pocketbook, after "Soapy" had lifted it from the victim's pocket, with a rapidity that made his less practiced fellow "stalls" proclaim him a *Wunderkind*.

Be it known also that the three bad men, with the severe simplicity of taste that belongs to an aristocracy, detested "pose." In the event of Renshaw's election as mayor the three believed that Cornville would assume a pose of rectitude, which was the less agreeable to them because it would hurt their business. Therefore, when Renshaw's nomination was announced, they took counsel with themselves and with Ruderick for the defeat of Renshaw and the better government of Cornville. It was Ruderick's distinction in every community where he happened to settle for any length of time to be asked for his view of all matters of importance to the Under World. Speaking generally, he did not give advice unless he felt like it, and for the most part he did not feel like it. He looked upon "chewing the rag" as a vanity, useless before a man has done his job and ruinous afterward. "More good guns talk themselves into the Stir in a year," he said, "than all the force could cop out in a cen-

## The Powers That Prey

ture.” He was by temperament a “single-handed” specialist: what he had to do professionally he liked to do alone, and no questions asked and no tales told. “A gun that works by himself can never turn state’s evidence, an’ there’s nobody to blame if the job turns bad and nobody to share with if it don’t,” was a remark of his which he invariably made by way of reply to all suggestions that he join a push. There were times, however, when Ruderick saw points for his own hand in general discussion, and “Fritzie,” “Soapy” and “Frenchy” dropped in upon him at a time when he was very seriously considering what cards at the moment he held. He was meditating the Great Idea.

“Fritzie” was the spokesman of the trio, and he gave Ruderick, from the trio’s point of view, very conclusive arguments why Herbert Renshaw, Esq., should not be elected mayor of Cornville. “If he’s elected,” “Fritzie” explained, “it’ll be the same thing over again that we was up against in York when that Reform Administration was in office. You know yourself that all us blokes had to get out just ’cause we was known, and the outside talent that the Front Office wasn’t next to railroaded to town and copped

## The Great Idea

out the coin. The Front Office couldn't do anythin' with the outside gang 'cause it wasn't onto their mugs. If Renshaw goes in we'll all have to mooch, and the guns that ain't known here 'll come to town an' rip it open an' get all the plunder. That happens every time a Reform Administration tries to run the police of a town, an' I tell you straight, Ruderick, I'm gettin' sick of it. I've got my stake in Barwood, an' I think we ought to elect him. He's crooked, of course, but blokes like us that are known can't do business where the mayor an' police ain't crooked. Renshaw 'll make some old Rube chief o' police, an' we'll all get the chilly mit. Who you goin' to work for, Ruderick? Barwood or Renshaw?"

The Great Idea had already found lodgment in Ruderick's mind previous to the visit of the trio. It had required numberless trips up and down the length of his apartment to grasp it in anything like its fullness, but once understood and appreciated, he immediately labeled it "the biggest graft" he had ever thought out. Had the trio called on him a few days earlier they would in all probability have found him amenable to their suggestions, but they postponed their visit too long. At the time of their call on him he had de-



## The Powers That Prey

cided to throw his influence on the side of the reformers.

"There's Reform Administrations an' there's Reform Administrations," he remarked, in reply to "Fritzie's" query, after a pause which was rather irregular for such an intimate conclave. "Them of us as was known o' course got ditched durin' that Reform Administration over in York, but you can't prove everythin' by what happens in York. York is York, an' Cornville is Cornville, an' I don't do in York some o' the things 't I do here, an' visy versy, as they say in the colleges. You say Barwood's crooked, an' that's jus' what I got ag'in him. He's too damn crooked. He's squeezed us blokes right an' left, an' put the dough in his own pocket. He won't live an' let live, that Barwood won't. He makes you an' me cough up half what we get, an' yet he's makin' three times as much as we are himself. That kind o' bloke I like to do, an' I'm goin' to do him this election. If I could see him alone some night in a barn I'd break his face in. He's the meanest grafter in this berg, an' you know it an' I know it. What you blokes don't know is that the Renshaw push is goin' to be easy to work. I got a head-piece on me, I have.



## The Great Idea

'Course they're goin' to try to reform Cornville, but you forget that Cornville's Cornville, and that any reform police force they put in office's goin' to be dead—dead, I tell you. Renshaw an' his gang don't know you an' me from any other four stiff in town. He'll change the whole force, thinkin' they're all crooked, an' them that's turned out 'll keep us under cover out o' spite. Things are bound to go that way, an' then we get our graft in an' there ain't no Barwood around to squeeze the profits out of us. See? You take my tip, an' turn in an' elect Renshaw."

These were his words and the first exposition of the Great Idea, and what Ruderick McKlowd recommended with a "take my tip," whether it was in "York," in "Chi," or in Cornville, usually "went," so highly did the Under World appraise him. And thus it came about that in Cornville the Under World determined to turn down Barwood and his following and help elect a Reform Administration.

Wadlow, Gannes and Latane were simple-minded men, who went about their business with a Homeric directness when once they had decided what was to be done. They had small faith in eloquence, and neither read the public prints

## The Powers That Prey

which favored the candidacy of Herbert Renshaw nor urged among their acquaintance such reasons as they themselves had thought of why it was to the interest of the Under World that Mayor Barwood should not be reëlected. They simply got themselves constituted the official guardians of the ballot-box and judges of the election in a single ward. As "Soapy" Wadlow, he who was slick with his fingers, expressed it, the people might vote as they liked, so long as they left him to do the counting. They had been judges of election the first time Mayor Barwood had been a candidate for the office he held, and had found the control of the nineteenth ward sufficient.

The election-day came and went; employers of labor gave a holiday that the workman might dedicate his entire vitality to his sense of thirst, and saloons ostentatiously closed their front doors in order that their patrons might enter side doors in the full delight of discovery. Mayor Barwood counted on the nineteenth ward. The judges of election sat about the stove in the polling-booth behind locked doors and smoked Henry Clay perfectos and drank whisky and club soda, and received reports from time to time of how the other wards had "gone." They sat a long time.

## The Great Idea

They made no effort to count the votes; they took turns sleeping, the sentinels keeping themselves and each other awake at an endless game of twenty-five-cent ante, ten-dollar limit. There was a dispute in the thirteenth ward in regard to the admissibility of certain votes which lasted all the night following the close of the polls and the next day and the night after that. There was understood to be a dispute in the nineteenth ward also in regard to the admissibility of certain votes. At seven o'clock on the second morning of the twenty-five-cent ante a message arrived that the dispute in the thirteenth was settled: Barwood needed a majority of five hundred in the nineteenth to elect him, and as the count stood he had a majority of but two hundred odd. The faces of the four men about the card-table were gray and sticky with fatigue, but a glance of understanding passed round as each man turned his hand forward to make his last bet.

"There's nothin' like an honest count, blokes, is there?" remarked Ruderick, with a yawn. "If we hadn't been here to see that the thing was done on the level, the majority 'ud 'a' been cheated out of its rights—aindt it?—as Dutchy used to say."

"That's what it would," commented Gannes

## The Powers That Prey

from London. "When a town wants a Reform Administration as bad as Cornville does, it ought to have it, an' the town can thank us for countin' the votes. I ain't done so much figgerin' in ten years."

"Well, here's to the Reform Administration, as you call it," said "Soapy," draining his glass. "Ruderick, you're the father of the beast; you want to train him."

"I tell you those too," said "Frenchy." "If he gets us on the run, Ruderick, we're gone."

"Trust me to keep a rope around him," replied Ruderick. "An' it'll be a damn sight easier than holdin' that Barwood, an' that ain't no dream."

## II.

When Mayor Renshaw came into his kingdom he governed it so as to save his own soul. Incidentally his course exasperated a great many other people who, but for him, would have lost their souls but once, or possibly not at all, into losing them twice over; but every one bent on saving his own soul is bound to think first of himself and to regard other people and their souls as details in the landscape or scheme of the world. The inhabitants of Cornville and its neighborhood have never been eminent in a gift for amusing themselves delicately and elegantly: about other cities in the United States it is not pertinent to make a statement, and none is made. The law of delight amongst the inhabitants of Cornville and its neighborhood is that they will not accept the first-rate at any price; the second-rate they will tolerate if it be cheap; but some amusement in quality beneath the second-rate they simply will have, no matter what the cost. Also the better classes of those beneath the second-rate are the

## The Powers That Prey

only ones which it is humanly possible by law to suppress; and once suppressed, the demand that found satisfaction in them is merely added to the demand which found satisfaction in amusements still less respectable.

These things Mayor Renshaw knew, but he had sworn to execute the law, and it was no part of his reading of the rules of duty that a man should get himself damned out of a consideration for other people. The scribes wish distinctly not to recommend the entertainment for "the youth of both sexes" offered in dance-halls; but they respectfully submit that the programme of the dance-hall is in part, at least, addressed to the eyes and the ears, and that the youth of both sexes might conceivably go farther and fare worse. Quite positively the scribes assert that the youth of both sexes in Cornville and the contributory country did go farther and fare worse when Mayor Renshaw closed the dance-halls. He closed the gambling-hells also, which is to say he scattered gambling broadcast throughout the town. Before his accession to office there had been a limited number of more or less recognized and responsible spots in the town where a man who was determined to lose money might



## The Great Idea

do so without great risk of violence or fraud; after his accession to office a man never knew whether he was "up against" mathematics or against the game which, in contradistinction to mathematics, is called "the sure thing"; therefore, since the charm of adventure was a new and strange one in Cornville, every one who gambled at all gambled more and oftener in Mayor Renshaw's reign than before. Drinking-places he did not close, because he could not, though he limited them strictly to the terms of their license; wherefore willful men drank by the bottle after hours instead of by the glass. But his great achievement was the creation of a police force that did not know how to wink. He had no respect for a man who could wink either literally or metaphorically; he held the opinion, which is perhaps audacious, that the man who can wink is not utterly indispensable. The inability of Edwin Cowles, Esq., to wink glorified all his remaining disabilities in Mayor Renshaw's eyes, who begged him to sacrifice himself on the altar of civic duty, which was Cornvillesse for accepting an appointment as chief of police. Mayor Renshaw said that neither he nor his subordinates should take tithes from the harvest of sin and shame, and Edwin Cowles sacri-

## The Powers That Prey

ficed himself. Both played their destined part in the realization of the Great Idea.

Then was the city of Cornville delivered into the hands of the three bad men, who opened it as their oyster, and that was *their* destined part in the realization of the Great Idea. "Fritzie" Gannes, with his "sure-thing" enterprises, reaped a harvest which he had never supposed Cornville could produce. He had thought that the town had done its utmost as a "sporty" community under Mayor Barwood's "open" administration; but he learned that a town is never so gullible as when Reform attempts to tell it that it "shan't." "Soapy" Wadlow and "Frenchy" Latane made similar agreeable discoveries. Pocketbooks were, perhaps, no more numerous than in Mayor Barwood's day, but they "came up easier," as "Soapy" put it. The new police force could no more tell when a pocket was being picked; they couldn't even tell when one had been picked, unless they found the "weeded leather" on the ground; and "Soapy" and "Frenchy" "dipped" deep with impunity. It is also to be remarked that they were not called on to pay a percentage of their winnings to the "wise." Indeed, the three were so pleased with

## The Great Idea

their success, and so confident of the innocence and ignorance of their constituents, that they determined to combine interests, and make a "run" on Richard Englar's bank. It was decided that the easiest way to achieve the "run" was to approach the building through a subterranean passage, and the three started to dig a tunnel.

When affairs were in this posture and the tunnel nearly complete, Ruderick MeKlowd stepped one day off a train which had brought him out of the beyond. The Great Idea had taken him away from Cornville soon after Herbert Renshaw was elected mayor, and it was the Great Idea that brought him back. With the letters of introduction and recommendation that he had in his pocket when he stepped off the train he was officially a much more respectable personage than when he left Cornville, but in essentials he was still Ruderick MeKlowd, "the Slick Chi Gun." He went straight from the train to the Front Office.

"I should like to see the chief," he said to the lieutenant on duty, and his name was taken in to the Reform Administration chief's sanctum. The chief granted the desired interview.

"Mr. Cowles," Ruderick began, "I have been

## The Powers That Prey

given to understand that you are looking for a new man for your detective force. I have had considerable experience in the detective business, and I should like to be your new man, if you're satisfied with my credentials. Do you care to look at them?"

The Reform Administration "allowed" that it would like to see Ruderick's credentials.

"I see that you are certified to as being a very 'wise' man," remarked Mr. Cowles, after a hasty perusal of Ruderick's papers. "I suppose that word 'wise' is merely a technical term in police parlance."

"That's what it is, Mr. Cowles. A wise man in the police business is just wise, that's all."

"You have some acquaintance, have you, with the criminal classes? We very much need a man who understands the ways of thieves."

"Of course, I don't set myself up as anything extraordinary, Mr. Cowles, but you've got my record in those papers. I certainly ought to know something about the criminal classes."

"Well, Mr. MeKlowd, I'll take your name into consideration, and notify the authorities that you have made application for the position. I will send you their decision to-morrow. Good afternoon, sir."

## The Great Idea

“ Good afternoon, Mr. Cowles.”

Three days later there was astonishment, bewilderment and profanity in the Under World. Ruderick McKlowd had been appointed chief of detectives in the town of Cornville, and the Under World wondered what the appointment meant. When inquisitive the Under World is like a child—it walks up and asks questions—and Ruderick McKlowd’s office was besieged by guns who desired to know what was what and what was “ doing.” Among the besiegers were three who had come by special summons. So far the Great Idea had progressed exactly as Ruderick had hoped it would. The financial value of the idea was still to be demonstrated. The three bad men were invited into Ruderick’s private office, where, by judicious questioning, they were made to declare that they had nothing whatever “ on ” and had not done any business in the town since the Reform Administration went into power, and that they had been “ ditched ” by Ruderick’s idea, and were sick of the place and ready to quit it.

To all of this Ruderick listened with a politeness which was exemplary in a public officer and

## The Powers That Prey

an old friend. When they had finished, his reply too was exemplary and significant.

“Blokes,” he said, “I ain’t much on chewin’ the rag, but I’m more’n a little glad o’ what you’ve told me, ’n’ that you’re sick o’ the town. I’m particular glad you’re not mixed up in that tunnel business under Englar’s bank. The fellers that’s done that has got to choke it off—see? I can’t stand for it. Anythin’ else ’ts been done ’fore I got here ain’t any o’ my business. For yourselves my tip as an old pal, since you’re sick of this town, is to get shut of it by the next rattler. I’m responsible for what’s done here from this on, an’ I’ll have to make a pinch if you hang around, so you’d better try a mooch. I guess you’ve made your pile here anyhow, an’ it’s time ’t you get your graft in elsewhere. I ain’t makin’ no passes at you nor nothin’, but if you sprint, you can catch that seven-thirty this evenin’. It ’ud give me a pain to see you here after eight o’clock to-night. So-long, blokes; take care o’ yourselves!”



### III.

Judge Barwood was not only a great administrator wise to discern the spirit of his country beneath the letter of its laws; he was also a great attorney wise to remember the letter of the law and of his oath when a client's interest could be served. He was a master of technicalities both in his profession and in the art of life, and had the name of being able to go with impunity the breadth of a hair closer than any other man in Cornville to the line that it would have imperiled his own and his client's liberty to cross. There were a score of tales, some of which, perhaps, went the length of being true, of legal and extra-legal stratagems put in practice by him to his own advancement in fortune and repute, and to the encouragement of a spirit of circumspection in and about Cornville; and it was said of him that he made it a point of honor never to turn away and never to fail to help, and to profit by, a client.

## The Powers That Prey

One evening—six days and a fraction, to be accurate, after Ruderick's historic warning to the three bad men—Judge Barwood was summoned from his bed by an importunate visitor who made himself agreeable by opening his business with the tender of a retaining-fee. The fee was a bundle of fifty-dollar notes; the man was, in appearance, perhaps sixty years of age, powerful, deformed, inordinately slouch-hatted, great-coated, long-haired, and whiskered.

"The bills to the best of my belief are gen-u-ine; your beard, to the best of my belief, is not," said the lawyer; "this looks to me like a fishy business."

"I do not offer you the beard as a retainer, I offer you the bills."

"And the voice in which you offer them is so far from being your own that you make me doubt whether the bills, however gen-u-ine, are gen-u-inely yours. I say again this looks like a fishy business."

"You seem to be a person of some penetration," said the visitor.

"If you had not thought so before you came you would not be here," said the lawyer.

"So long as you do not know my real beard

## The Great Idea

and real voice I don't care how well you know my false beard and false voice. As for the money, you may take it or leave it!"

"And that's soon said," replied the lawyer, laying the bills on the table between him and his client with a gesture that neither took them nor left them. "Try a seat," he said, standing before an open fire and toasting a costume which was ostentatiously provisional. "Take off your coat and hat and make yourself at home."

Judge Barwood had a good gray eye with a twinklę in it, and the accent of his invitation was jocular.

"I am much more comfortable with them on; the room is cold," said the visitor.

The thermometer on the jamb of the door registered in the full gaslight seventy-three degrees.

"Just so," said Barwood appreciatively; "and now about the business."

"The business is the height of simplicity; I have stolen fifty thousand dollars; for personal reasons I object to any one's attempting to pursue me and to take away the money."

The visitor also had a good gray eye. Also the accent of his announcement was the least in the world jocose.

## The Powers That Prey

"And that's a very natural objection too," said the man of law. "The plainest way to avoid it is to send the money back."

"If I had been looking for the plainest way I should not have had to come to your honor for advice. I could have found the plainest way myself."

The two pairs of good, gray eyes looked into one another with appreciation.

"I repeat," said the judge, "that this looks like a fishy business. And what is very much to the point in an affair of this magnitude, that bundle of notes on the table is too small to be looked at without discomfort."

"That bundle of notes is not a small fee for listening to me tell you that I have stolen fifty thousand dollars. That is all I have asked for it. When you have told me how to keep the fifty thousand the bundle on the table will be bigger."

"It would have to be a great deal bigger."

"Would it set a limit to its bigness if the man out of whom the fifty thousand comes has done you dirt?"

There were not a great many men in Cornville from whom fifty thousand could be lifted. Barwood's face took on a look of intense interest.

## The Great Idea

"Not Englar?"

"Englar."

Barwood's face broadened into a grim smile.

"You are quite resolved not to be advised to put the money back?"

"Quite."

"It is really my duty to urge the point."

"You *have* urged it."

Barwood with the grim smile still lingering on his face strode for a time up and down the room, an incarnation of practical intelligence in labor, in a dressing-gown. He came at last to a halt in his former station before the fire.

"Could you steal any more?" he asked gravely.

"How much more, for example?"

"Well!—say a second fifty thousand. You could hardly make a deal with less."

"I have stolen a second fifty thousand," said the visitor, drawing a considerable parcel from under his cloak and laying it on the table. "I calculated myself that it would take just about a second fifty to protect the first."

"You seem to be a client of great forethought," said the lawyer.

"It needs a client of great forethought to em-

## The Powers That Prey

ploy an attorney of great penetration," said the visitor.

"It is only left to settle where and when I am to let you know what I have done; I suppose you can trust yourself not to get caught," said Barwood.

This was unkind: the Powers That Rule were become a joke in Cornville, and Renshaw, who had been Barwood's rival, was the point of the joke.

"I can trust myself a good deal better not to get caught if I don't trust any one else with my address. When I want to know what you have done I will come and ask you. Good night, Mr. Attorney."

"Good night, Mr. Scamp."

The two men parted with mutual respect and good-will.

Barwood had made it a point of conscience in the conduct of his life, when he had a thing to do which was agreeable to himself and disagreeable to some one else, never to procrastinate. There was besides another reason in the present case for dispatch. It did not enter into his views for his client that Richard Englar should not have a chance to keep his loss unknown.



## The Great Idea

“Mr. Englar,” he said, with the regret which a man throws into his voice when he speaks of the misfortune of a personal enemy, “I am informed that you have just been robbed of a hundred thousand; I don’t know whether it is true or not. A man so bundled up that I could make nothing of him visited me at my house just now and told me so; he added that you could not find him, and that if you did find him the money would be either dissipated or spent in conducting his defense. If you guarantee to make no effort to find him and to keep the affair out of the hands of the state, he offers you twenty-five thousand; twenty-five thousand to take or to leave. I don’t know whether this offer is real either, nor how he expects you to get the money; certainly he gave me no name or address. He told me nothing but what I state and then took his leave. I made no attempt to lay hands on him,” concluded the lawyer dryly; “I didn’t want to deprive you of your chance of recovering twenty-five thousand, nor our new police force of its chance of distinguishing itself.” . . . . .

There is singularly little more to tell. Englar and his board of directors had a meeting before daylight that morning, ascertained the truth and

## The Powers That Prey

moved motions and passed resolutions. They resolved to get the thief if they could; they resolved that they could not afford to let twenty-five thousand slip through their fingers; they resolved for the present to keep the loss concealed from the public press and from the state. They consulted with Judge Barwood and instructed him to notify his client, if his client should again enter into communication with him, that they had taken his offer under advisement; secretly they employed one Ruderick McKlowd to find out what he could about the robbery. Judge Barwood's client did not at this time again enter into communication with him; and Ruderick found only that the tunnel by means of which the bank had been entered had been made by one Gannes with the assistance of two companions, named Wadlow and Latane respectively; but he soon obtained word that they were in Philadelphia, actually in detention at the time the bank was broken into; there had been a national convention at Philadelphia and the police had put the three bad men where they would do most good. Of their whereabouts since their release nothing could be learned. Englar said that Ruderick was as big an ass as the rest of the

## The Great Idea

Front Office, and must have turned fly cop because he could not make a living as a thief; an opinion which was possibly premature. The directors of the bank once more consulted with Judge Barwood and instructed him to notify his client, if his client should again enter into communication with him, that they accepted his offer. Some days afterward they bound themselves, their heirs and assigns in a manner and form which Barwood thought worth twenty-five thousand to himself and his night visitor, and in return for the document he paid that amount.

Two nights later he was going home from his office in the dusk when a quavering voice demanded an alms. The speaker was a patched and battered figure; a decrepit old man, wild-eyed, and wild-haired.

"It's only a drink I want," repeated the beggar, as he shuffled along at Barwood's side. "You see 't I'm no liar—I don't want nothin' to eat. I want a drink. It only costs a dime, boss."

They had reached a stretch of field through which Barwood was wont to make a short cut to his home, and as he left the sidewalk and turned into the field-path, the beggar suddenly straightened himself, dropped the whine in his voice, and

## The Powers That Prey

tapping Barwood familiarly on the shoulder, said: "I say, Mr. Attorney, hand over that agreement that you made for me with Englar."

A fortnight later Ruderick was discharged from the Cornville force for drunkenness and incompetence. The expectations he had raised when Chief Cowles engaged him he had not fulfilled. Upon his discharge he paid a visit to Chicago, where he kept a safe-deposit vault, in which he placed among other things the agreement which Judge Barwood had obtained for his unknown client. This was the finishing touch in the realization of the Great Idea.

## FOUND GUILTY.

### I.

Among the graver misfortunes in the Under World is that of being in the right in a contest with the Powers That Rule. When a man adds to this misfortune the sheer folly of pressing his rights offensively, the gods have abandoned him. The gods had abandoned Howard Slifer even in the hour of his triumph; from the first his humiliation was a certainty; the precise time and manner of it only were left in doubt.

Howard Slifer was a gentleman of the Under World who allowed it to be generally known that any one who asked him for a fight would get it. A sensitive recognition of the claims of other people and an austere respect for them does not belong to the point of honor in the Under World; the point of honor in the Under World is for the most part concerned with a man's sensitive recognition of his own claims and his determination to have other people austere respect

## The Powers That Prey

them; and Howard Slifer was punctiliously honorable. He was possessed of considerable sums of ready money, kept, with some trifling exceptions, in strong-boxes, the formula for opening which invariably included a drill and a bit of dynamite. The trifling exceptions were small matters of loose coin and broken rolls of bank-notes which people of fortune, who had had no previous acquaintance with Mr. Slifer, stood and delivered to him "at sight" and "on demand," and by a solecism in their business habits asked no quittance or receipt. His physique was a patent of nobility in which all who stood might read a power to levy taxes and to assume possession of his personal estate wherever he might find it. He was of the build that led men to follow him with their eyes and to speculate upon the amount of "punishment" he could take and could inflict, and while they speculated they respected him greatly—him and his man servant, and his maid servant, his ox and his ass, and everything that was his.

Captain Brigstock, of the —— Precinct, was not a man; he was a deputy divinity, and respected nothing except the arch-deputies, his official superiors. Technically there were sharp



## Found Guilty

limitations to his constitutional powers over mere mortals, but in practice technical distinctions so seldom obtruded themselves upon his notice that his sense of them was apt to become quite vague. What the precise occasion was of his entering Mr. Slifer's domicile, nobody in the outer world ever plucked up courage to ask him. When Slifer was asked, he said that the captain had dropped in unofficially, on "private business," and added no comment beyond a malign grin. There was an impression in the outer world that the captain had made his visit expressly at a time when he knew Mr. Slifer was not at home, and that Mr. Slifer had returned unexpectedly; what was certain is that the captain made his exit from the Slifer domicile in unconventional haste, and that no mention of the incident was ever made in the public prints. He had reached the street from a second-story window through which he had backed with such violence as to bring away the sash. This was the hour of the haughty Slifer's triumph, and the hour when the gods abandoned him.

Three weeks afterward there occurred a manifestation of *esprit de corps* among the Powers That Rule which it was not pleasant to contem-

## The Powers That Prey

plate. Patrolman Hooper, of Captain Brigstock's precinct, had been murdered overnight while on duty; and not only in Brigstock's precinct but throughout the city the force was of one mind. It was not only that if an officer on duty is not safe, not a man of them was safe; there was an element of insult and effrontery in an attack upon a patrolman that stirred something more in his associates than personal fear; it touched their corporate pride.

"Somebody's got to croak for this," Detective Swinton declared sententiously to a group of his brother "sleuths." "I don't care if Hooper was only a flatty. He was a copper, and we fly cops have got to send some bloke to the chair for bastin' him. There's a push o' guns in this town that thinks flatties don't count, that there won't be much of a kick when one of 'em 's keeled over, an' they 'll croak some of us fly cops before long if we don't learn 'em a lesson. It was a great bull somebody wasn't croaked for the killin' o' Patrolman Stimson two years ago. Stimson was a fool 'right enough to go up against the gang that did him, but if one of 'em had croaked for bastin' him, Hooper 'ud be alive now. I tell you guns are just like kids when it comes to learn-

## Found Guilty

in' 'em anything. If they see 't ye mean business they 'll crawl, but if ye monkey with 'em, they 'll t'row ye down. There's some that thinks that guns 'll act on the level with coppers whether they got to or not. That's damn rot. 'Course there's some squarer than others, but I've known all kinds for twenty-five years, an' I give it to ye straight, they ain't built to like us. They got the same class feelin' 't we have, an' if we don't croak one of 'em for doin' Hooper they 'll get so nervy that coppers 'll be droppin' in their tracks every month. They got to be called down."

The law for the Powers That Prey is that it is better ninety-nine guilty men should escape than that one innocent man should suffer; the law for the Powers That Rule is that an example must be made. The Powers That Prey must suffer as a clan for an offense against the Powers That Rule. The clan must give up its offending member or must stand in terror and uncertainty of where precisely the hand of the force will strike. That it will strike somewhere there must not be the slightest doubt.

The orders of Captain Brigstock were laconic and smacked of his divine authority. He recognized no impossibility in the case; he spoke with

## The Powers That Prey

the accent of omnipotence; he said simply: "Find him; I don't want to hear a word about difficulties; damn the difficulties; I want him found." There were for the moment but the slightest indications to go upon. Hooper must have been struck from behind, must have turned upon his assailant and in the scuffle lost his helmet. At least he had been stabbed twice in the back and had received a heavy downward blow in the temple, from which his helmet would have saved him. The mainspring of his watch had been broken and the hands marked five minutes past four—thus determining almost with exactness the moment when he was assaulted. His assailant had been hurt and could be traced by blood-stains to a sheltered doorway half a block distant, where he had seemingly bound up his wounds and changed his clothes. A hundred other details were reported, but for three days these remained, in spite of the command of deputed omnipotence, the only ones that were significant. Then came a statement that a short time before his death Patrolman Hooper had had a difficulty with Howard Slifer, and that high words had been exchanged. . . . .

It is said that Slifer attempted to break away

## Found Guilty

when he found himself safe within the walls of the station-house in the —— Precinct; he was, at all events, soundly clubbed before he was locked in his cell. The blows given were accurately measured according to his power for taking punishment. It may be doubted whether Captain Brigstock had been more thoroughly bruised when he measured his length in the street. It is, perhaps, a chance coincidence that the captain was present while Slifer was being taught the power of the law.

The evidence against the prisoner was worked up with systematic vigor. The negative evidence especially was significant: it could not be discovered that at the time Patrolman Hooper was struck down the prisoner was not near at hand. Patrolman Gundy, in a misguided moment, opined that almost at the precise time of the murder he had seen the prisoner enter a house a dozen blocks distant from the scene of the affair. The outburst of disapproval with which this statement was received made Patrolman Gundy uncertain first about the precise time, then about the precise man, and finally about whether or not he had seen any one. Patrolman Conard opined that at a quarter to five he had passed a



## The Powers That Prey

man, who might be the prisoner, within a block of the scene of the affair. The captain asked him what in the name of things unprintable "his glims were for," and told him pointblank that any one not an ass could say whether a man that he had passed was the prisoner or not; and Patrolman Conard became certain that he was not an ass, and certain that he had passed the prisoner, and not at all certain that the hour was a quarter to five or a quarter to four or to three. A safe had been blown open in the building immediately in front of which Patrolman Hooper's body was found, and the prisoner's method of collecting the living that the world owed him was well known. There were a number of other people who employed the same method, but that is a detail. The abandoned clothes were much too short in the arms and legs for the prisoner, and much too small to have been drawn on over a second suit; but clad in his underclothing only it was just possible he could squeeze into them; and the less perfectly they fitted him, the better the disguise. And at the time he was stripped and examined in his cell he had so many recent wounds that the only difficulty was to decide which of them his captors had not given him.



## Found Guilty

The indictment before the grand jury was secured by evidence which, as the newspapers said, was so "overwhelmingly convincing" that murder in the first degree was the only charge permissible. The district attorney publicly complimented the police on their handling of the case, and declared that never before during his activity as public prosecutor had he known of a murderer who was not actually seen committing the crime being brought to the bar of justice with proof of guilt so thoroughly established and ably presented. In an interview with a representative of the press, he said: "Captain Brigstock's men have not only avenged the murder of their brother officer, they have demonstrated afresh the remarkable ability of the city's police force. It is no light matter to protect a city as large as ours, which in the very nature of things becomes a Mecca and Medina for criminals, and it is gratifying to know that our safety is looked after by so conscientious a band of officers."

The patrolmen ordered before the grand jury not only distinctly remembered seeing Slifer in the near neighborhood of the scene of the crime soon after it was committed, but they produced the weapon with which Hooper had been struck

## The Powers That Prey

down, and showed the jury several rolls of bills, taken from Slifer's pockets, which there was no doubt were part of the plunder he had secured in the safe robbery. Free to indulge his imagination as to how the struggle between Hooper and Slifer took place, the prosecuting attorney portrayed the villain discovered by the virtuous Hooper in the act of blowing open the safe, or in the act of endeavoring to escape, no matter which. The intellectual and wholly impatient jury, who had business of their own, which they were not attending to, saw in their mind's eye the prosecuting attorney's vivid picture, saw the villain Slifer blow open the safe, saw him make his escape, saw the devoted Hooper attempt to arrest him, saw the struggle, the blows, the gleam of the knife. Finally they saw in private, with eyes not of the mind, Slifer's mishandled body. To add force to these specific arguments, Slifer's record, both as "peter-man" and convict, was produced, and he was declared to be one of the most desperate offenders in the country. There was nothing for the intellectual and wholly impatient jury to do but indict him, and he was bound over till the next term of court.

## II.

Francis Pirie and James Schell were two travelers of the Under World who had just returned from Europe to secure fresh letters of credit. They had made the fashionable grand tour of the Continent, had "blown themselves" at the Monte Carlo "crib," had seen wonderful things in forbidden Paris, and had come back to "God's country" to attend to business until their bank accounts should permit of another trip abroad. Schell had suggested while they were in Paris that they recoup their fortunes on the spot and avoid the seasickness and miscellaneous locomotion, but Pirie's counsel had prevailed, and they arrived in "God's country" about three weeks previous to the murder of Patrolman Hooper.

"There's dough on this side all right," Pirie admitted in reply to Schell's suggestion that they establish themselves in the French capital, "but it ain't our kind o' dough. I been rubberin' round pretty strong since I been on this side, an' I'm next to how the money market stands over

## The Powers That Prey

here. You remember that fellow from Vienna 't I borrowed a hundred from in Rome, an' how he kept tellin' me to be sure an' return it by the time I said I would? Well, he shows up the whole business. He was a nice enough bloke, an' had the rocks an' all that, but he ain't the kind o' bloke that lets you an' me live an' take trips abroad. When he figures up his accounts at the end o' the year, everything must balance. He'll have a whole string o' items jus' called 'man ain't made o' wood,' but he knows where them contributions went. See? Well, it's the same all over Europe; they all got to know where and how their dough went, who got it, and what they got for it. It 'ud kill 'em to figure up one o' the columns in their account books, and have to write after it: 'Gone, an' damn me if I know where.' They've got dough, but they ain't got no dough to lose without makin' a hell of a beef about it. See what they did with Bidwell when he made that Bank o' England touch in the early seventies. Gave him life! W'y, them Englishmen thinks money is somethin' sacred, holy, religious like. I gamble a thousand that old bank could be touched up again for a million or two, but they'd hang the bloke that done it. It's not like that

## Found Guilty

on the other side: ev'ry year there's just so much dough lyin' around loose to be swiped, an' if it ain't swiped it's put down in the profit column. It's the same kind o' dough that's lookin' for circulation in poker games. It wants to keep movin' an' changin' hands, an' guns is there to give it rope. See? It's a kind o' Providence!"

"An' the coppers is there to make the guns trouble," retorted Schell. "It's all right about the loose dough, but how about the loose fly cops? I'd rather take my chanst with ten o' these Rube coppers here in Paris 'n with one o' the fly elbows in York."

"Aw, everybody's a copper on this side," urged Pirie. "You remember that gun in Berlin tryin' to make a get-away after he'd picked the Moll's pocket, an' how the whole street sprinted after him? That's the way they do things on this side—the crowd is in sympathy with the copper an' not with the gun. In the States they give a gun a runnin' chance, an' let the copper do the chasin'. That's what's what an' the way it ought to be."

The morning of the day following the murder of Patrolman Hooper, two men were in earnest

## The Powers That Prey

conversation in a gaudily furnished room in an up-town hotel. One lay on the bed with a bandage around his head; and from the blood-stains on the clothes it was evident that he was nursing a wound; the other sat at the bedside. The two were registered on the hotel's books as coming from Sydney, Australia, and had signed the names, Richard Wamperson and Jackson Mather.

"You put his light out all right," the man at the bedside remarked. "They picked him up croaked."

"Serves the duffer right," mumbled the invalid. "Anybody been copped out yet?"

"The 'pipers' say—jes' listen to my furrin eddication!—that the police have pinched that Michigan bloke, Slifer. We done a bit with him in Cherry Hill eight years back—remember? the bloke 'at made old Brigstock take that quick sneak out of his flat one day. They're goin' to railroad him for fair. The *World* says the police found the weapon on him, an' the *Journal* claims 't he had some o' the bank's dough in his pockets."

"Them newspapers is gettin' real wise. What a lot they do know. Seems like a gun can't do nothin' any more 'thout bein' pinched for somethin' else!"



## Found Guilty

This comment was certainly ungrateful, the invalid not having been pinched of late for anything. More than that, it was unintelligent: the invalid did not understand the arrangement of things which makes imaginative "news" columns indispensable.

"I'd sooner be pinched for what I didn't do 'n what I done; it riles a bloke's sense o' justice to be accused false an' helps him put up a front," declared the other. "But you kicked in Payree about everybody bein' a copper in Europe an' a gun havin' no chance; what do you call the newspapers in this country but coppers?"

"Fly ones, ain't they! They ain't copped out you an' me; they're as dead as the stiffes in the Front Office!"

"They say Slifer got away with the full fifty thousand 'cause they only found a few rolls on him. They're smart, they are! They think he's made a plant somewheres."

"Shows you how dead they are. They know about's much who copped that coin as Slifer does. 'Course the police 'a' got to put up a bluff an' 'r' glad to pinch anybody; but you'd think them papers might take a tumble to themselves once in a while."

## The Powers That Prey

"Good job for us 't we wasn't mugged that time that old Freckleton got 'is glims on us. Three years ago, ain't it?"

"Longer'n that; an' besides old Freck's croaked. He's the only man on the force 't knew us."

"Oh, I ain't leary, I ain't; but it's pie to take your constitutional without everybody rubberin'. Say, I guess I'll take a bit of a leg-loosener an' see 'bout bankin' that dough in London. That's where we need it in our business, an' the sooner we get it there the quicker. We want to mooch soon as you can stand for the ante!"

"A' right, but don't be long—I'm dead to the world up here alone. So-long!"

"So-long."

. . . . .  
The night of the beginning of the eighth week after the murder of Patrolman Hooper, Francis Pirie and James Schell were sitting "at whisky" in a fashionable midnight resort on Sixth avenue. Pirie should have been at home and in bed; almost any layman could have told him that he was gravely ill. He was a dime-novel specter, and the flesh had drawn back on his bones till they began to stand out in sharp angles. The inference of an

## Found Guilty

outsider would have been that he was another of the victims which the life in fashionable midnight resorts sometimes demands, but inferences made by outsiders show their wit and not their knowledge. The only person present who really knew what was what was James Schell, but he would not have admitted this even to Pirie. There was a look of disgust in his face while he watched the sick man reach feebly for his glass.

"It's a wonder you wouldn't take a bracer. You've been belly-aching around these joints for the last two months, an' I'm gettin' tired o' lookin' at you; I want to mooch to the other side. Any one 'ud think that that copper had hit you with a baseball bat the way you play the baby act. He jus' gave you a love tap with his mace, that's all."

"A couple o' love taps like that 'ud 'a' put out my light then and there," Pirie answered wearily. "I'm a sick man, Schell."

"Sick nothin'. Why the devil don't you stay to home if you're sick? You been followin' me about for the last eight weeks like a cur purp. I never asked you to. Stay to home an' nurse yourself if you're so knocked up; I'm agreeable; I'm gettin' bally tired o' hearin' you whine. You

## The Powers That Prey

don't need to be afraid o' me; I ain't goin' to knock against you; nobody 'll ever find out from me 't you an' that flatty couldn't hit it off together; I can keep as dead about that as you can. An' I ain't goin' to do you out o' the dough either. You'll get all that's comin' to you when we get to London. It's banked there, an' half of it is yourn. But I give it to you straight, I'm goin' to give you the chilly mit if you don't stop doggin' me round to all these joints."

"You give me the chilly mit?"

Pirie sat upright in his chair with an obvious effort. The hand of death was upon the man really, but he had his grit with him.

"That's what I said. You're all right when you want to be, but I won't stand for any more o' this shadowin' me about—see? What I think is, you're bughouse."

Merely to acknowledge that he was sick was a confession which, in the circumstances, it had cost Pirie more than Schell realized to make; to sit at a table with a man whom he had looked upon as his pal and hear that he was "bughouse" was a challenge which even his weakened state could not keep him from accepting.

"Take that, you duffer!" he hissed between

## Found Guilty

his teeth, and threw his beer-glass with all his might at Schell's head.

The fight was over before the attendants could interfere. Schell tried to throw Pirie to the floor, and Pirie sent a bullet through his heart. His light went out without a flicker.

### III.

A man lay dying in the hospital ward of ——  
Prison. Captain Brigstock of —— Precinct  
sat beside his couch.

“Scheduled to croak all right—ain’t I? Raise  
me up a bit, Cap. Thanks.”

“That’s what they call it, Pirie.”

“Well, Cap, I might as well tell you now as  
later. You got the wrong bloke in that Hooper  
business. Slifer didn’t do Hooper. Give me  
some more o’ that dope there—quick—I—I—*am*  
—dyin’. Lord but it’s a dirty job to die: an’ me  
too—I die bad. That’s why I’m tellin’ you.”

The stimulant revived him for a moment.

“Say, Cap—me an’ Schell—you listenin’?—  
put it on paper, blokey; I’m gettin’ kind o’ weak  
in me tubes; got the pencil there?—Me an’ Schell,  
we croaked—gettin’ it down? we croaked  
Hooper; me in front with a billy when his helmet  
dropped off, an’ him behind with a knife. That  
stuff in the papers was rot. An’ Schell, I put  
his light out, damn him: he tried to do me out o’  
the dough. That’s why I’m here. See?”



## Found Guilty

His mind was wandering.

Brigstock's pencil paused and Brigstock himself took it for a sign of some special care of Providence for him that Pirie's confession had been made to no one else. What kind of Providence would naturally choose him out to care for, and whether in highest heaven or deepest the other place, he had not leisure at the moment to inquire.

"Where's the dough planted?" he asked.

The sick man's eyelids fluttered open, but with no recognition of Captain Brigstock or of his question; there was a great light of anger and pain in the eyes, and the lips drew back from the strong discolored teeth.

"You give me the chilly mit!" he almost shouted, half rising in bed: "Take that, you duffer!" and he flung himself bodily on Captain Brigstock.

It was quite true Pirie died bad. . . .

That evening Brigstock in his lodgings meditated afresh on the special care of Providence. At the end of his meditations, which he had assisted by striding up and down the room, he knelt by the open fire and tore out and burned certain leaves from his notebook.

. . . . .

## The Powers That Prey

The night of New Year's day, some ten months after the murder of Patrolman Hooper, Howard Slifer sat in his cell in ——— Prison, and talked through the bars of the cell door with his "death-watch." The evidence given at the time of his indictment had been repeated with additions at the time of his trial, and among those additions the confession of Francis Pirie was not found.

"You hear what I'm tellin' you, Jackson," Slifer said that night; "I ain't turnin' soft an' kickin' 'bout goin' to the chair: not me! It's up to me to sit in it, that's straight. An' I've done enough to deserve croakin' ten times over; but, Jackson, it ain't up to me to stand for the killin' o' Hooper. I didn't do it. Course the evidence don't look that way, an' they think that they've got me dead to rights; but that jus' shows how bughouse some o' the things in this world are. Jackson, if Hooper could get up out of his grave now, he'd say, 'Slifer didn't do it.' I don't mind croakin' for anythin' I done, but I hate like hell to croak for somethin' I didn't."

## ON SENTENCE DAY.

Some had waited nearly a year, others for several months, others for but a few weeks. The jail was old, and inside and outside looked much as it did in 1840, when it was built. Tramps liked it on account of the roomy corridor where they were permitted to lounge in the daytime, and because the prisoners cooked their own food. The raw materials for the meals were passed into the jail through a little window in an iron door, and the men took turns in cooking. The cells were placed above the corridor, and at night the sheriff came and locked us in until morning. We numbered, all told, nineteen men and boys, sixteen of whom were court prisoners who had stood their trials and were waiting for their sentences. The remaining three, including Ruderick Me-Klowd and myself, had had their punishment meted out to them by the wisdom of a local magistrate, and were serving it out then and there.

Ruderick and I had been unfortunate enough

## The Powers That Prey

to fall asleep in a box car in the local railway yards, and the magistrate before whom we were brought had been inspired to make an example of us. "I want you men to learn to sleep where civilized people sleep," he explained; "it is possible that you need a little training to get into the habit again, and I shall send you over to the sheriff for a month. If you behave yourselves, you will find him an agreeable host." We behaved ourselves, and found the sheriff an agreeable host, but he took the most interest in what he called the "transients"—the men whom Justice had weighed in her balance and found wanting—to a degree which she had not yet taken off her bandage accurately to ascertain. They presented a subject of speculation and mystery which we did not, and in return for the interest they gave him the sheriff offered them gruff little courtesies which he hoped would help somewhat to keep their minds off their coming ordeal. Some of them were culprits of long standing, men who had taken their "stretchers," as they called their terms in prison, regularly and without flinching, but none of them knew what his next "stretcher" was to be. Some of them were lads sure to go to the reform school; and all of

## On Sentence Day

them, men and lads, were to retire from the world for a certain period—but how long? The limit that each of them *could* get was well known, but no one believed that he deserved or would get the limit.

Prisoners the world over feel that the fact that they have been caught at all is a punishment, and justifies them in expecting a compromise with the judge who is to sentence them. If detection itself is a punishment, any further discipline ought to be measured according to the disappointment and chagrin which the detection has caused. This is irrational, but all men are irrational according to their opportunities. It was the uncertainty as to how far Justice, in the person of "the old man," would be willing to compromise on this basis that kept the men on a strain. Morning, noon and night the constant word was: What will "the old man" do? The first thing we heard even before the sheriff had let us out for the day was the call from cell to cell of the men to be sentenced that they were twelve hours nearer the appointed time. Even during the night mutterings reached Ruderick and me from the men who had been waiting longest. One night we heard an old man of sev-

## The Powers That Prey

enty, who might have been the grandfather of nearly all of us, cry out in his sleep: "Make it a year, Judge, just an even year"; and he threw into the words all the pleading and pathos that he could have commanded had he been awake.

At last the morning came when Justice was to take off her bandage, and the sheriff told his wards that they must hold themselves ready to go to the court-room at any moment. He was not sure himself of the exact time when his honor would call for them, but he cautioned them to be quick in responding to the call when it came. Every one rushed to his cell to get his clothes in order. "Want the old man to see me in my best," one said, and the others followed him up to the cell gallery and began to overhaul their scant supply of "togs." They discussed the merits of a patched waistcoat or a frayed necktie as women do the most delicate finery. "How d' you think th' old man 'll like this?" a man called "Bony" said, holding up a coat.

"Get it sterilized, Bony; it's full o' graybacks; th' old man 'll give you de limit if they get to paradin' around the court-room," another remarked, not untruthfully.

"How d' you'se think this white rag 'll take?"



## On Sentence Day



queried still another, dubbed "Jet Eyes," exhibiting a "boiled" shirt which he had kept under his pillow for weeks for fear it would be "swiped."

"Keep it to swing in, Sammy," advised his cellmate. "It's too good jus' to get two years in. Put it in a safety vault till croakin' time comes."

In an hour they had all put on their best, and a dress rehearsal in the corridor was in order. One of the oldest prisoners was appointed judge, and the men lined up in front of him. This was play, and in a measure comedy, but not wholly so: the culprits expected to catch from the mock judge and the mock sentence some omen of what their fate was to be. The judge carried off his part with impressive dignity and severe eyebrow. He had borrowed a clean collar and a sky-blue necktie for the occasion; he had absolutely refused to officiate except in costume. The men practised attitudes and gestures which they expected to use with effect later in the day.

"Hungry," he said, in a voice which was proper to the majesty of the law, to the man at the head of the line, "you was caught in de act, wasn't you? Now, that means bunglin'. Blokes what knows their business don't get pinched in de act. But you'se gettin' old, Hungry. We all

## The Powers That Prey

knows that. You must be nearly fifty. De law says that for what you done I ough' to give you fifteen years, but I don't b'lieve you'll last that long. You'se got so many diseases you'se goin' to croak before a great while. Now, it ain't right to give a man life for bunglin', an' that's what it 'ud be if I gave you what de law says. I'm goin' to be square with you; I'm goin' to give you a chanst to die outside. You'se good for about two years yet, 'f you take care o' yourself, so I sentence you, Hungry, to eighteen months to de penitentiary."

"Thank y', yer honor," said Hungry, bowing awkwardly.

A faint murmur of approval and applause arose in the audience.

"Silence in de court," cried Rhadamanthus, with truculent majesty; "bring up de next prisoner."

He was a boy of eighteen, called "Eddie," who had been convicted, in company with an older companion, of burglary.

"Kid," the mock judge went on, "you'se started out too fast. You'se too young to do climbin'. If I sent you to de penitentiary you'd learn a good deal, but you'd get your head

## On Sentence Day

turned talkin' with de men, an' you'd tackle too big jobs for your years an' experience when you got outside again. If you'se goin' to be an A Number One gun, Kid, you wan' to go t'rough your apprenticeship; you wan' to begin at the beginnin', and a good place to do that is in de Ref—all fly crooks has been trained in de Ref—so I sentence you to de Ref till you're twenty-one. But I'll be square with you, too. I won't consider it 'any reflekshun on my connection with de case,' as de old man 'ud say, if you run away 'fore your time's up."

"Don' send me to the Ref, yer honor; I bin to the Ref, an' it's nothin' but a kids' joint; I can't learn *nothin'* there." . . .

He went through the line of men and boys; sometimes the scene being comical, and sometimes pathetic. The rehearsal finished, the crowd broke up into little groups. Some of them gathered around the table, others took their stand near the iron door, impatient for the sheriff to call them. Ruderick and I took seats on a bench in one of the corners, and the boy "Eddie" and his pal strolled up and down the corridor. His pal urged him to take advantage of his boyish appearance and try to get a reform-school sen-

## The Powers That Prey

tence. "You can run away after you'se been there awhile," the man said, "an' then you'se free. —Sée?"

"Damn the Ref," the lad replied. "I'm goin' to the Pen."

Know that kind o' kid?" Ruderick asked, nodding in the direction of the two when they had passed out of ear-shot. "I can read his future for you. Did I ever tell you 'bout the Michigan Kid? It began way back in '77, when I was doin' a bit for the state, havin' done an' bungled a bit for myself. The jail was over in Pennsylvania, an' one day the sheriff brought in a young fellow who'd been bound over for bitin' off more'n he could chew, which is grand larceny. They caught him red-handed. He was a nice, plucky-lookin' little chap, an' I saw right away 't he was new to the business. He didn't have much of a story to tell at the time; p'r'aps that was why he wouldn't tell it. I found out later, however, that his father was a swell lawyer over in Michigan, an' his people had sent him to a boarding-school, an' he'd mooched. His money gave out, an' he done the touch, or tried to do it, to get some dough. He was not quite seventeen

## On Sentence Day

then—a tenderfoot as far as you could see him. He'd been with the hoboos a little before he got pinched, an' knew some o' their lingo; but jus' the way he shaped up an' asked us all when he first come in what we was 'shut up' for, was enough to put us next.

"Well, I liked him just 'cause he was a tenderfoot. Wise kids is interestin' an' all that, but you don't always like 'em, just as you don't always like wise blokes. It takes all kinds o' people to make the crooks' world, same as to make the good people's world, an' there's been tenderfeet 't I've liked better'n anybody else. I forgot what the Kid told me his name was—prob'ly didn't remember to give me the right one, anyhow—but I jus' called 'im the Kid. I call him that still, but I guess I'm the only one that does it. He's a pretty big stiff to-day, an' everybody can't slap 'im on the back. I sort o' brought 'im up, you know, an' he ain't one o' them that forgets things—except his name.

"'Course I'm proud 't he's turned out a fly bloke, but things was different when I first got to chewin' th' rag with him in that jail; I tried to persuade him to go home. I told him to write to his gov'nor an' get the thing fixed up. I can't

## The Powers That Prey

tell you exactly why I done it, but it's God's truth that even now—an' I ain't no chicken—passed my forty-eighth birthday last month—yes, sir, even now I hate to see a kid who's been brought up decent hit the road. With me 't was different. Both my old folks was crooks, an' I never had a home anyhow. Stealin' came natural to me, an' Chicago, where I was born, made me wise. If a man's got a bent for swipin', Chicago 'll tell him how to get his graft in. You know that as well as I do. New York ain't no saint, neither—some mighty good thieves have come out o' that town—but if a kid is lookin' for a place to get dead wise, let him railroad for dear old Chi. I like the place, God knows, but it's crooked—crooked as a fish-hook.

“ Well, this kid 't I'm tellin' you about, he listened to me all right, but he wouldn't write to his gov'nor. He was stuck on himself—see?—an' right, too. ‘ I wouldn't have the gov'nor find me here,’ he says, ‘ 'f I had to take ten years in the Pen.’ Well, I didn't know anythin' better'n to tell him to ask the judge to send him to the Ref. I know what the Ref is as well as the next bloke; I know that it's where a lot o' kids gets wise. Old Fraxy, when he was makin' believe sen-



## On Sentence Day

tencin' Eddie a few minutes ago—he told the truth. The Ref's the place where a thief goes through his 'prenticeship. Jus' the same, I'd rather see a kid o' mine take his chances in the Ref than in the Pen, an' I gave it to that kid straight. I told him what he'd find at the Ref an' what he wanted to steer clear of, an' then I explained to him how he could get a mooch on an' give the shop the slip. He was a nervy kid, an' there's mighty few Refs 't a nervy kid need stop in if he's got a hankerin' for the open. W'y, they had me in a Ref when I was twelve years old, an' I didn't stay there a week. They got me back after a while, but I mooched again, an' they're lookin' for me yet.

“ Well, the judge, he gave the Kid what I told him to ask for. I'd explained to the Kid how he wanted to put in his plea when the judge asked him if he had anythin' to say why the court shouldn't pronounce sentence on him, an' he got off his song an' dance all right. I can hear the Kid now when he came back to the jail. He came up to me an' said: ‘ Ruderick, if I can beat that school, I'm goin' home to the gov'nor. You've done me a good turn, do you know it?’ 'Course I jollied him along a little an' told him not to get

## The Powers That Prey

too Sunday-schooly all of a sudden when he got home, an' the next day the sheriff took him away. An' for the next three years Ruderick MeKlowd used to pat himself on the back every now an' then when he thought o' the Kid. I pictured him at home, you know, livin' with his gov'nor, goin' to school, fallin' in love with nice girls, an' gettin' to be one o' the town's promisin' young men. I had to do a bit in the Pen about eighteen months after the Kid was sent to the Ref, an' whenever I'd get real down in the mouth like about the latter end o' things an' what's what, I used to say to myself: 'Well, Ruderick, you did that kid a good turn anyhow,' an' I'd brace up. I remember once wakin' up in the middle o' the night out of a dream. I'd been up in heaven, an' Peter he wouldn't let me pass the gates. 'You're a bad lot, Ruderick,' he says; 'I couldn't let you in 'f you was me own son.' I remember 't I said to him, as well as if I'd said the words out loud: 'Peter,' I says, 'ain't you forgettin' that good mark 't I got for bein' square with that kid,' an' then I woke up. I'm just tellin' you this, you know, so's you can understand how things was."

There was a pause in Ruderick's narrative, and

## On Sentence Day

the bolts of the iron door of a place quite other than heaven were shot back to remind us how far from heaven we were. Every one thought that the judge had sent for the men to be sentenced, but it was a false alarm. The turnkey had a letter to deliver to one of the court prisoners, and we separated into groups again; and Ruderick knotted the broken thread of his reminiscences.

“Are you listenin’?” he asked.

“Sure,” I replied. A man cooped up is interested in everything; if he wasn’t, he’d go off his head.

He continued:

“About three years after meetin’ the Kid, I got settled in the Pen across the river from this town where we are now. The same judge had hold o’ me once before, an’ he was hostile an’ gave me five years; I guess I’d earned it. The place began to get crowded after I’d been there about a year, an’ we had to double up, an’ who do you think they gave me for a cell companion? That kid! There he was with his hair cropped an’ the stripes on ’im; I knew him the minute they shoved him into the cell.

“‘Kid,’ I says, ‘this ain’t reg’lar; how’d this happen? Did the gov’nor cut up rough?’

## The Powers That Prey

“ ‘Ruderick,’ he says, ‘I never went back to the gov’nor. I done as you tole me an’ mooched from the Ref—mooched the second week. But they got me again. A farmer ’t I went to for breakfast the mornin’ after, he sent for the copper at the Ref, an’ they took me back. The super gave me a lickin’ for fair, an’ told me ’f I give him the slip again he’d stick me in the dungeon. Well, I seen kids bigger’n me come out o’ the dungeon; I ain’t a baby, but I couldn’t stand for it—I ain’t goin’ to lie about it. I stayed there a year, an’ got to be one o’ the boss kids o’ the shop. An’ you know what that means, Ruderick,’ he says; ‘the kids that ain’t bosses look up to you an’ think you’re a dead fly bloke. They keep crackin’ you up as a perffessional, an’ after a while you begin to think yourself that you’re hot stuff. That’s the way it went with me, anyhow, and at the end o’ the year I didn’t think any more ’bout goin’ back to the gov’nor. I’d made up my mind ’t I *would* be hot stuff an’ a perffessional; an’ one night another boss kid an’ me, we jumped out one o’ the windows an’ got away. He knew of a place where there was semoleons lyin’ loose, an’ we went an’ got ’em, an’ I been hittin’ it up that way ever since. He’s

## On Sentence Day

in here too. We got pinched for goin' on the dip, an' the judge gave us both three years. I thought they'd put us together, but they didn't. He's in the cigar factory, an' I'm over in the foundry. Gosh, it's hard work in that foundry, Ruderick. The guard's got it in for me too. He does me every time he gets a chance. I've been in the dungeon twice already.'

"Well, I don't need to tell you how I felt—that kid 't I'd been bankin' on! I suppose I ought to 'a' braced him up again an' talked to the warden about him an' got his gov'nor on his track, but a fellow like me ain't good for two stabs at reformin', an' I done just the opposite. A man's skill aches in him till he gets it out, jus' like the right words for a thing, an' I trained him to be a perffessional. I didn't do it right away. For nearly six months I kept squeezin' my brains to figure out what I ought to do, but it's a temptation to a fellow like me to have a chance to make a good thief out of a smart kid. I don't know if you've ever been in the same fix yourself, but to me sometimes the temptation to hand on what you know 's worse'n whisky. You see, I've always been a crook, an' I can't help figurin' out what I can make of a nervy kid if I get my blink-



## The Powers That Prey

ers on him. 'Course after what I'd told him three years before in the jail 'bout goin' back to his gov'nor an' bracin' up, it seemed eatin' my words to give him the steer I did; but I was square with him. One night I told him what I would or wouldn't do, just as he wanted. 'Kid,' I says to him, 'I can put you next, if you like, an' make you a first-class grafter; but you want to make up your mind for keeps whether you want to be one or not. You can't play with the business. You got to forget all about the gov'nor. Once a grafter, you got to stick to it if you're goin' to succeed.'

" 'Ruderick, my gov'nor 'll never see me again. I'm a thief, an' he'll feel better thinkin' I've croaked.'

" He meant it, an' for the next twelve months—he celled with me a year—I done my best to make him a wise one. I don't know if you ever trained a kid or not, but let me tell you that there ain't anythin' nicer in this world than fashionin' a youngster with brains. It's jus' like trainin' a kid o' your own. You watch him gettin' next, day after day, an' you keep sayin' to yourself: 'I'm doin' this. They got to give *me* credit for him.' It's discouragin' as the devil when the kid



## On Sentence Day

ain't smart, but that kid 't I had was smart as they make 'em. He'd catch on to what I was describin' to him 'fore I'd even finished what I was sayin'. 'I see, I see,' he'd say; an' I could go on to somethin' else.

"What surprised 'im most was the priv'leges a bloke can get in the Pen if he knows how. I had 'im out o' the foundry an' in the feather-pickin' department—the softest snap in the place—a week after I took hold of him. There was a detective 't had the run o' the place, an' he an' the warden grafted together. The fly cop 'ud find out which pris'ners could raise the stuff to make it interestin' for him to go to the warden an' ask favors for 'em, an' then he an' the warden 'ud divvy. I knew the fly cop from way back, an' I worked him without money. He knew 't I was pretty wise, an' he came to me one day an' gave me a straight steer. Says he: 'MeKlowd, if you'll put me next to anythin' that you know's goin' on outside, I'll stand for somethin' soft here in the Pen.' He knew 't I knew the blokes outside, an' was likely to be able to tell him what they was doin', an' he wanted to get wise off me. I pretended to take the tip, an' he began showin' me favors. I ain't done such tall lyin' in a ten-

## The Powers That Prey

ner as I did to that copper; but he never got on to me. I'd say to him: 'There's goin' to be a safe blown open out in Chicago next month, an' you want to get next.' He'd thank me an' tell the warden to do somethin' for me 't I wanted, and then go gallivantin' all over the shop. 'Course the safe was never blown, but all I had to say was that the crooks had prob'ly got scared off, an' he took it all in.

"I even think that I could 'a' got the Kid out o' the Pen through that copper. I might 'a' had to put up a little cash to grease things, but the fellow had an all-fired big pull. He knew 'bout the warden's bein' crooked, an' the warden knew 'bout him, an' both had to square each other. See? But I didn't try to spring the Kid; jus' kept on trainin' him. You know what he is to-day. We old uns call him The Michigan Kid, but the coppers all know him as 'the fly Detroit crook.' He ain't been in prison in the last ten years, an' yet he's doin' stunts right along. He's got a block o' houses out in 'Frisco, an' owns a big gamblin' joint in Chi—an' I guess he grafts ten thousand every year besides. He's so slick they can't touch him. He shows up in Detroit every now an' then, an' they lock him

## On Sentence Day

up as a suspicious character if it's circus day, or there's some big convention on; but they have to let him go in a few days. There's blokes that call him a freak; they say 't he had luck. That's rot. If all the crooks in this country had that kid's brains, they'd be just as successful. I tell you brains count for as much in this business as they do in bankin'. If you ain't got 'em, you can't be A Number One.

"I saw the Kid 'bout a year ago over in York, an' he told me 't his gov'nor still had a reward out for any one 't 'ud give him news of his son. He read 'bout it, he said, in a Western paper. He asked me if I thought he ought to write to the old man. I told 'im no. 'Kid,' I says, 'you decided 'bout that way back when you an' me was in the Pen together. You couldn't stay home if you went there, so why make a bull an' show up at all?'"

"'I hate to make the gov'nor feel bad,' he says.

"'That may be, Kid,' I says, 'but you ought to 'a' thought that out years back. It's too late now.' He agreed with me."

Once again the bolts of the door not of heaven were shot back, and this time there was no letter to be delivered.

## The Powers That Prey

"All ready, boys," the sheriff called; "his honor's waiting on you."

The men and boys were handcuffed together in couples.

"Good luck, fellows!" we cried after them.

And in solemn procession, with the sheriff at the head, they went to their fate. Some of them are still "doing time," others are again waiting for Sentence Day, and a few have passed on to that final court from which there is no appeal, and which they dread least of all.

## PEGGIE NIVEN.

### I.

Every human being would perhaps question the statement, but the fact is that every human being lives on a theory and acts nine times out of ten as the servant and interpreter of an idea. Fate intervenes the tenth time and converts the servant of an idea into a hero or a poltroon according as God or the devil has created him, but these interventions are episodes.

The idea which Peggie Niven served and interpreted was that the world is a "graft." She did not go the length of claiming originality for this idea. It does not differ at all from that held by many eminent persons in all ages that everything any one possesses belongs to anyone else who is strong enough or cunning enough to take it and keep it, and that honesty is, strictly speaking, one of the luxuries of personal pride, taxed heavily as are all luxuries of pride. She was exceptional only in the frankness with which she acknowledged her

## The Powers That Prey

idea to herself. It seemed to her simply the self-evident maxim on which all the people she had ever known from her earliest childhood had consistently acted in moments when they had their wits about them; and her wits she intended to keep about her always. She needed them in her business. Lisle Prankerd and Edwin Parlbj had also their ideas, but neither they nor their ideas are of any consequence whatever, except incidentally.

Late one evening, when the persons of this story were many years younger than at present, Lisle Prankerd was making his way to his lodgings along one of the ill-lit streets in the outskirts of Omaha. He did not lodge in the outskirts of Omaha because he regarded them as an ideal place of residence, but because since his college days he had been looking for his fortune and had not found it. That afternoon, indeed, it had occurred to him that he might never find it; which notion being to him so unnatural as to be morbid, he had taken counsel with his wisdom and invited certain of his acquaintance to try whether it is possible to dine in Omaha. When the bill for that experiment was paid, he carried in his waistcoat pocket his last bank-note, and



## Peggie Niven

hadn't an idea in his head where the next bank-note was to come from. As his uncertainty on this point, however, did not trouble him, he regarded the wisdom of having dined as unquestionable. He stepped lightly and briskly and hummed a bit of a street-song much in vogue in those remote days, and when at an obscure corner he was summoned to "t'row up" his hands he laughed aloud. But he "t'rew up" his hands.

"Keep 'em up now, young man, keep 'em up," commanded the knight of the road. "I got some more dates to-night, an' I can't linger with you long."

"Hope they'll bring you in more than this one," answered Pranker, while the stranger rifled his pockets, taking from him his lone bank-note and gold watch.

"You might be fatter," the robber admitted, stepping back with the plunder in his left hand. "Beggars can't be choosers though, can they? So-long, blokey!"

"Don't you want to give me back that watch? My best girl gave me that."

"I'd like to accommodate you, pard, but I need it in my business. Besides, you'd prob'ly hock it to-morrow, you're so hard up. So-long,

## The Powers That Prey

blokey; glad I met you; take care o' yourself!"

"I guess that won't be hard now that you've got all I had that was worth taking care of. If it's just the same to you I won't mind if we don't meet again."

"Don't be unpolite, young man. If you ain't got no respect for yourself, at least think o' the repitation o' the city. Take care o' yourself." And the stranger disappeared in the darkness.

What measures the following day Lisle Prankerd took to fill his pockets need not be told. The point is that for the time being they were wholly unfruitful, and that that evening also he stepped lightly and briskly homeward humming a bit of a tune. He had not a cent in his pocket, but he had dined—by invitation—and he had telegraphed "collect" for money, which would be delivered him in the morning. Having at the moment nothing to lose, he had nothing to worry about; and when at the same obscure corner he was once more summoned to "t'row up" his hands he laughed even louder than before.

"You're a merry one too," said the robber, advancing to inspect Prankerd's pockets. "Keep yer han's up: I can go t'rough you without help."

"Seems to me that I have heard that voice before," returned Prankerd.

## Peggie Niven

"P'raps you have; let's swap looks at each other under this glim here." And the robber drew Prankerd toward the street-lamp. "W'y, you're the bloke 't I touched last night," the stranger exclaimed on verifying his suspicions. "Y' oughtn't to keep such late hours."

"You oughtn't either, pard," said Prankerd, "if you don't get any more for your pains than you'll get from me to-night."

"Can't tell, my boy, till I've looked you over. Ain't sewed everythin' up in the linin' of your coat?" Again the robber rifled Prankerd's pockets, but this time without getting even a cent of plunder. "You *are* dry," the robber exclaimed, still covering Prankerd with the revolver. "I almost feel sorry for you. Come nearer the lamp, an' lemme get a good squint at you. Say, you ain't such a bad sort. Ain't you got no one you can touch?"

Prankerd laughed. "No, I'm up against it all right. Suppose you let me put my hands down."

"Not on your life: you're more comfortable with 'em where they are! You're young too, ain't you?"

"Not so young as you."

## The Powers That Prey

"Pard, don't get passin' them remarks about, or I might get generous. Say, on the level, are you really busted?"

"If I hadn't had an invite to-night, I couldn't 'a' dined."

"Is that straight?"

"Straight as I can make it."

The robber lowered the revolver, and drew a five-dollar bill from an inside coat-pocket. "Dine on me to-morrow, pard," he remarked, handing Prankerd the bank-note. "The watch I needed in my business as I told you, but I ain't goin' to have you runnin' around hungry on my account. When you're in luck, p'r'aps I'll touch you up again. Take care o' yourself."

"Same to you," said Prankerd, and the two separated again.

It is the supreme distinction of business in the United States that it possesses the interest of roulette, and that a man never knows what is going to happen next. A year after Lisle Prankerd consulted with his wisdom, and dined accordingly, he had found his fortune; he was at least at the moment hard in pursuit of it as fast as the New York-Chicago express could bear him. It was a momentary check to his satisfaction that he

## Peggie Niven

found as the train was drawing toward Columbus that he had lost his purse. Columbus is no place for a man who has found his fortune and lost his purse, and Prankerd knew it, and he told the conductor that he knew it. He told him also that he knew the general superintendent, and that this gentleman would not be pleased to hear that passengers on his train were deprived of their purses. He indicated further that it would be politic for the conductor to make an effort to recover the purse before Columbus was reached. Fortunately for the conductor, the detective of the division was on the train, and he was immediately advised of the theft.

There are railway detectives and railway detectives. Some are "dead" and can do nothing more profitable than ride on their passes; others are half "dead" and are equal to but little more than arresting tramps and train-jumpers; and others are very much "alive." Franklin Izod, the detective on the train drawing into Columbus, belonged to the last category.

"How much dough was in that purse?" he asked Prankerd.

"What has that to do with you?" Prankerd counter-questioned. "All you need to know is

## The Powers That Prey

that I have been 'touched,' and that I want my purse back."

"Think you'd know your leather again if you saw it?" Izod queried with justifiable sarcasm.

"Find it, and see," said Pranker.

Pranker's alleged acquaintance with the general superintendent impelled Izod to make a search, but he was tempted to tell Pranker to go — well, to Europe! "Wise" railway detectives should be taken gravely, but, of course, Pranker had not been let into the mysteries by which "fly cops" are rated "dead" and "wise." The first thing that a "wise copper" on a train does on learning that a passenger has been "touched" is to go through the train and see whether he recognizes among the passengers any known thieves. Izod began in the smoking car and went through the train to the last Pullman. In the last seat of the last Pullman, he saw and recognized his old acquaintance Peggie Niven. He bowed, shook hands, and sat down beside her, not at her invitation. "Wise" detectives get on without invitations.

"Suppose you've thrown the leather out o' the window, haven't you, Peg?"

"What leather?" demanded Peg, foolishly



## Peggie Niven

giving away her knowledge of the world by repeating the word.

"That leather 't you pulled up in the next car."

In polite society it is bad form to make a woman formulate a "bluff" without giving her time to make a guess or two, but they do things differently in the Under World, and Peggie had to indicate her "bluff" in the next sentence she spoke, and she had to speak quick.

"Sir," she said, "if you do not leave me instantly I'll call the conductor. I'll call him anyhow. Conductor!" she called. He came. "This man is insulting me, and I wish you would order him away."

It was a poor "front," but the woman was at bay, and she had to take big chances. The conductor was soon advised by Izod how matters stood, and was told to ask "the gent that had been touched" to come and "size up the slick Moll." The "slick Moll" had attracted the attention of the other passengers, and by the time Prankerd appeared there was a willingness on the part of some of the men present to interfere in her behalf. It was just as well for the men that they did not act upon their willingness.

## The Powers That Prey

"Did you see this woman in your car?" asked Izod of Prankerd.

Prankerd admitted that he had. "She sat for a while in the seat behind me, and later she asked me to rise from my seat while she looked for her gloves."

"That's all for the present, sir," said Izod. "If you will kindly take a seat at the other end of the car, I'll join you in a few minutes." Prankerd took the seat.

"Now, Peg," continued Izod, "you better cough up an' have no rows, 'cause I've got you dead to rights. You just dive down in that stockin' o' yours an' haul out the roll. If I can, I'll fix it up an' let you mooch."

Peggie knew of nothing better than to keep up her "bluff," and she kept it up with vigor and force.

"You dirty louse, you," she was moved to say, "I wouldn't dive down in my stockin' for you or any other slob like you. You leave me alone."

"Want me to pinch you?"

"Oh, pinch your old clapper-tongue, will you, an' shut up."

Peggie saw fit to make these remarks at the top of her voice, and her ordinary manner of speaking was not quiet.

## Peggie Niven

"All right, then," said Izod, "put up your dukes while I put the cuffs on 'em. If you can't appreciate kindness, I'm not goin' to fool with you. Put 'em up!" And Izod drew out his handcuffs. It was an unpleasant scene for a Pullman car, but Prankerd knew the general superintendent. Peggie had no more than seen the handcuffs when she changed her "bluff"; she screamed and wept like a woman in a fit of hysterics. Prankerd and other men in the car rushed to the rescue. "Couldn't they, perhaps, do something for the woman?" they asked, and crowded about Izod and Peggie. Prankerd pushed his way through the gathering, and he and the woman looked each other full in the face. Suddenly, the woman again changed "front."

"Aw! git away, it's my pal," she said, laughing, and grabbed Prankerd's hand.

"You've got me, my good woman."

"That's what I had in Omaha; don't you remember Omaha?"

"Yes, I remember Omaha, but what's that got to do with pal?"

"Don't you remember the two nights you were held up out there? I'm sure you're the bloke. Ain't forgotten, have you, how the fel-

## The Powers That Prey

low that held you up divvied with you? He had on a brown coat, don't you recollect, an' talked with you 'bout dinin'? You wouldn't send a fellow like that over the road, would you?"

The detective saw things coming his way and released the hand he held. Prankerd scrutinized the face before him and did not ask it how it came to belong to a woman; he only expressed an opinion in regard to the judgment to be passed upon him after death. The spectators tittered.

"Sure. We're pals. Shake," said the woman, not meaning to assent to Prankerd's expressed opinion, but to his unexpressed recognition.

"Seems to me you've changed since Omaha days," said Prankerd, accepting the invitation to "shake" and laughing. Prankerd was not a snob, and the titter of the spectators had brought the humor of his case home to him.

"Changed my duds but not myself; I'm just as square as I was then, an' you ain't goin' to see me railroaded just for makin' a little touch. I didn't know you when I saw you in the other car; you can gamble on it. Fix the thing up, will you?"

Prankerd meditated; he liked Peggie. "Divvy and divvy, turn about's fair play. Hand out the roll and I'll split it with you, I'll give you half."

## Peggie Niven

Peggie produced the roll from her stocking, and handed it to Pranker. He counted it, and handed her back half.

"*You'se* a man," she said.

"So are *you*—sometimes!"

The detective viewed the exchange with greedy eyes, but said nothing; there was nothing for him to say. By rights, as rights go in such circumstances, there was nothing for any one to say, but one Edwin Parlby, also a passenger, thought otherwise. Edwin Parlby had a Calvinist somewhere among his forbears; he did not know just where, but no matter for that; he spelled government and justice in "large caps" and had ideas of public spirit. He had watched the transaction between Pranker and Peggie with a mixture of astonishment and indignation; and when people did in his presence what he thought wrong, it was his habit to tell them so. He knew the habit was unpleasant, but he said it was a duty. He stepped forward and addressed Pranker.

"I beg your pardon, do I understand that you mean to allow this woman to go free?"

Pranker looked at the speaker with exasperating good humor. "I'm sure I don't know what concern that is of yours," he said.

## The Powers That Prey

“ Although you know absolutely that she has picked your pocket? ”

“ Although I know absolutely that she has picked my pocket. I repeat, I don't know what concern it is of yours. The pocket was not your pocket. The lady happens to be a friend of mine; she is at liberty to pick my pocket whenever she likes; indeed she has exercised that privilege from the first time she met me! ”

“ Get a mooch on, you snipe-nosed galoot,” interrupted Peggie. “ Mind you own business if you got any.” Edwin Parlby's nose did bear a striking likeness to the bill of a snipe, and one of the bystanders hummed the chorus of a popular song—“ *Why don't you git a lady of your own?—Oh I do' know!* ”

“ I'll soon make it some concern of mine!” said the virtuous Parlby. “ Detective, I call on you to arrest that woman as a thief, and the man as a witness, or worse, leaving the State. If you don't, I'll do it myself; and I'll make it damned hot for you.”



## II.

Fate, which makes history, and is much concerned to make it worth reading, ordained that ten years after Edwin Parlby's exhibition of public spirit the three actors in the little scene in the railway carriage should find themselves settled in the same municipality. The place was in the far West, and need not be designated otherwise than as the city of Blank. People in the far West are sensitive and prone to show their appreciation of scribes who report ill of them with a vivacity which the present historians are anxious to avoid.

The three had prospered greatly in the interval. Edwin Parlby's concern for the welfare of the public was quite compatible with a concern for himself. He had recently got the leading bank of the city of Blank where he could squeeze it and had squeezed. The intelligence of the board of directors was so stimulated by the pressure that they discovered he was just the man they

## The Powers That Prey

had long wanted for president. Lisle Pranker was one of the directors; it had been in the city of Blank that he had found his fortune. He resigned from the board and parted with his interests in the bank when Parlby was elected: he said he did not like the union of so much public spirit and so much private enterprise in the same man. Peggie Niven was the local queen, in the city of Blank, of the Under World.

In the Under as in the Upper World there are some women born queens; they take supreme positions, and command and exact obedience as their natural right. Such women are amusing and entertaining, and at times very powerful, but are often more easily overthrown and deprived of power than the woman who has made her power secure by first being unobtrusive. Peggie Niven was such a woman. It may, indeed, be said of her that in the early part of her career she had never so much as dreamed of queenship. She never possessed the gift of allurements; from the first she was obliged to win her way without the woman's strength which is beauty and without the man's which is muscle. She had to make up for both by pluck and audacity, but the latter quality was a comparatively late development.

## Peggie Niven

Pluck she had as a child. She was born in one of the slums of New York, and from the very beginning of things had to suffer privation and brutality. At seven she was one of a crowd of children who fed themselves from the grocer's sidewalk display. At ten she was selling newspapers and sleeping in cellars, in spite of The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. She knew about this society; all "wise" slum children have to know about it; but the society did not know about her. At the age of fifteen she was an expert pickpocket, and "buzzed" around "Molls" at funerals, and relieved them of their "leathers." She had seen how this trick was done while vending papers, and her gift for mathematics made it clear that "Moll-buzzing" was much more remunerative than sleeping in cellars and peddling Park Row literature. Some girls come to this conclusion earlier than did Peggie. It must be admitted that it is not founded wholly on mathematical proofs; but Peggie even as a child required that things be definitely demonstrated to her before being satisfied that she was not being "stuffed." Later she was not so exacting in this particular; her audacity had developed and she had learned to trust "her nerve."

## The Powers That Prey

She was twenty-two years of age when she first introduced herself to Prankerd. She had shifted from New York to the West out of motives of personal shyness: the "Metropolis" wished to show her public courtesies which she would have found embarrassing. The police had made her acquaintance, had demanded and secured a photograph of her none too attractive countenance, had given her a number in their gallery of celebrities, and were eager upon the first opportunity to show her still other marks of their esteem.

Her career in the West for the first few years of her residence there is remarkable mainly for her ability to assume a man's responsibilities and to take a man's chances. She drifted soon into a "mob of grafters," and did anything which came to hand and promised to be profitable. Eventually she became leader of the "mob," but before long she decided that her talents and self-reliance were suited better to "going it alone." Sentimental attachments, and interest in men merely as men, are not reported in connection with this period of her life.

Her reappearance in the East, if it be no offense to Columbus to classify this "berg" with Eastern communities, was intentional and in pur-

## Peggie Niven

suance of a carefully planned tour, but it chagrined her very much to be told in Columbus by the judge before whom Stockholder Parlby succeeded in bringing her, that it was the will of the commonwealth that she settle in its penitentiary for five years. "It's my last trip East," was her resolution on receiving the sentence, which was shortened by good conduct to three years and nine months—time enough, however, for her to come to some conclusions, the most important of which was that "graftin' doesn't pay" and that she was "goin' to chuck it." As a rule, it takes women longer to come to this conclusion than it takes men; they allow instinct to regulate their crimes as well as their affections; men appeal to their reason, and reason is never so long-suffering as instinct—at least so say criminals. By this it must not be construed that Peggie was prepared to join the ranks of the discouraged. Not she! When Lisle Prankerd offered what was to her and at an earlier time would have been to him a great sum of "regret money" for his unwilling participation in her compulsory residence in Columbus, to make "a stab at something else," she immediately went West and cast about for a new business.

## The Powers That Prey

The possibilities in the West for a woman of resources are infinite. Ruderick McKlowd is authority for the statement that "a woman with a good mug and some dough in her stocking is the best investment in the West a man can go in for," and he is reported to have expressed a regret that he wasn't born a woman. Peggie at different times in her life sincerely regretted that she had not been born a man. Whether as a man she would ever have amounted to what with Prankerd's aid she did as a woman may be doubted. On her return to the West she "took a fresh deal in the game," and her name appeared in the tax-collector's books in the city of —— as that of the owner of certain temples where men sacrificed to Fortune and to other heathen deities whose worship is not extinct. Beyond the limits of her own clique she was neither queen nor priestess; she was "that coarse woman that you always see at the races"; within the limits of her clique, and it was not small, she was the "swiftest rag on the Coast." No one ventured to name her title to her face; she was Mrs. Peggie Niven; but the "push," her world, claimed the right to speak of her in the vernacular. They took a proprietary interest in her success, and ac-



## Peggie Niven

cepted her as their exponent and benefactor in matters of Under-World importance. If a crook of prominence died it was naturally expected that Peggie should help to bury him, if he had forgotten to invest in a burial association. If a gambler "went broke" he betook himself to Peggie for a fresh "stake"; and if a friend got "pinched" Peggie was the one to bail him out. It is even reported that the Upper World levied upon her for contributions to charity, and got them. It is not reported, however, that she was ever seen in an Upper-World drawing-room. In the words of the Under-World song, she "wouldn't be a lady if she could." Her horses often raced with those of Upper-World celebrities, and her money was deposited at the same bank which held the "securities" of all the virtues, but personal contact with her was essentially an Under-World privilege. She had not even found it convenient to get "square" with the officious Mr. Parlby, the old acquaintance of Columbus days, and a near neighbor in the city of ———, but it must be confessed that she was a woman who seldom did anything that was not convenient.

At the time when the directors of the Bank of the Occident discovered that they had long

## The Powers That Prey

wanted Edwin Parlby for president, the citizens of the municipality of —— were universally occupied in a game of beggar-my-neighbor, which cannot have been gambling because there was and is an ordinance against gambling in public places duly passed and made a part of the effective law of the city. It makes all the difference that town-lots are played for instead of chips, and that the expanse of heaven itself serves as walls and ceiling of the gambling-hell. The last great game of beggar-my-neighbor had been played to a finish about ten years before, and with a handful of exceptions every one's neighbor had been beggared with such completeness that there had been neither money nor pluck in the possession of citizens sufficient in number for playing the game since; but of late every one had begun to assure every one else that the cards were cut and shuffled for a new deal. Every one had begun to assure every one else that "good times" were coming, when every one would say in chorus that he believes the price of real estate is going up, and (the voice of the people being the voice of God) by a *fiat* of lies would increase its value and make something out of nothing: all of which means, that in the city of ——, where

## Peggie Niven

any man might become a millionaire or President of the United States, every man felt it no more than respectful to Lady Fortune to give her a chance to do something handsome by him. There had been ten years of labor and saving which made no one happy because it was not the custom for any one to consent to be happy on what one man may make by the work of his brain and hands; it was but common sense seemingly for them to pool their savings from time to time with the understanding, that every one should cheat and be cheated until the luckiest or most skillful half-dozen gamesters got possession of the pool. By this arrangement, some few at least were made happy.

Lisle Prankerd was one of those whom the last division of savings had made happy. In the conviction that history repeats itself, it is perhaps not unnatural, that he was also among the first to encourage another division of savings and should expect to be made happy again. His fellow citizens did not hold him either hateful or infamous for this. On the contrary, inasmuch as he had cheated them in all honor and had dedicated some portion of his winnings to public improvements, they held him a shrewd fellow and were humbly

## The Powers That Prey

grateful to him. When he said that "good times" were coming his words were bandied from mouth to mouth, and every one who heard them, instead of being rationally sorry and tightening his purse-strings, was irrationally glad. This cheerful unreason in a community is called a spirit of business enterprise. When it was known that he had bet "good times" were coming and had staked almost all he had realized on his interests in the Bank of the Occident—that he had quietly bought options on bits of town and suburban property for which there had hitherto been no market—the cheerful unreason became more cheerful and there was an instant disposition to back his bet.

What checked their cheerfulness for a moment at least was not that they perceived its unwisdom and that backing Pranker's bet was precisely the way to make him win it and win it from themselves; it was that Parlby had made a bet on the other side. He had for a long time bought in whatever realty was offered at forced sale in and about the city, and was become the largest holder in the county. When the "spirit of business enterprise" stood erect because of Pranker's investments, Parlby reduced it at a stroke to a state of limp dubiety and surmise; he

## Peggie Niven

began to offer his holdings for sale at any price, at whatever he could get. Prankerd was admitted to be shrewd, but it was just possible he was "losing his grip"; it was quite certain Parlby had "done" him in the matter of the Bank of the Occident; it was obvious to any one that if a man is bent on gambling at all on a rising market the ideal course for him is to hold off until he cannot win much and may lose everything. This cheerless unreason is called a spirit of business caution.

Lisle Prankerd did not want the property which Parlby offered; that was why he bid it in. It was also why Parlby offered more and yet more for sale, and why Prankerd continued to bid it in; until it became plain that if the "good times" really did not come, and that suddenly, the last man that any one need wish to become would be Lisle Prankerd.

When matters were in this posture a card was brought one morning to Prankerd at his office.

"Yes, it's me," said Peggie entering; "always on hand when I'm wanted, and sometimes when I'm not. I come to talk business and you can send away that young man if you don't want him yourself as a protection or a witness; I want to place some 'dough'; I want to know on the level



## The Powers That Prey

what all this shindy means between you and Parlby. The town's a good town an' I believe in it; I want to buy some lots."

"And you come to me for advice? I advise you to hold off. The boom's coming all right; but it won't come till Parlby wants it to: Parlby's got me treed."

"You mean it's just a case of freeze-out?"

Prankerd laughed.

"You speak as if a case of freeze-out were easy. Yes, it's just a case of freeze-out."

"Damn Parlby," said Peggie.

"Just my sentiments, only much more elegantly expressed," said Prankerd.

"All right; I guess I know all I want to," said Peggie.

"So do I," said Prankerd.

"Yes, I guess you do; but I give you a pointer. I don't know whether I'm going to take a hand in this game or not; I don't mostly tell what I'm going to do beforehand, it mightn't be convenient; but just you don't cash in your chips before you have to."

And with this oracular metaphor she started to take her leave. She paused at the door.

"I owe that Parlby one from way back: it's about time his luck took a tumble."



### III.

The precise logical connection of the matters still to be narrated with each other and with the matters already detailed must be left in some measure in an obscurity which the intelligence of the reader no doubt will penetrate. The plain facts are, that immediately after Peggie's interview with Prankerd there was a second fund in the market to oppose Parlby; Peggie had strained her credit, which was considerable, to the utmost and became a reckless buyer of options.

A few days later a rumor ran like mad through the town, in especial through the Under World, that the Bank of the Occident was not safe, and depositors in a passion of haste to withdraw their accounts fought on the bank floor for priority. The story ran that the bank had been robbed in open day: the story was scoffed at in the streets and in the clubs; the deliberate opinion was that Parlby had overreached himself, and that the robbery was a "fake"; and the deliberate opinion

## The Powers That Prey

was confirmed when it came to be understood that after a hasty meeting of the directors Parlby was held to have overdrawn his personal balance and was in the opinion of his associates discredited. Parlby, the deliberate opinion was, had been sacrificed, justly enough because of his private ventures, to save the bank. After a day or two a definite account was made public, but the account was too "sensational" to obtain immediate belief. The bank was solvent, but it was indubitably weakened: the sporting world needs its capital where it can lay its hands on it at a minute's warning. The sporting world's capital is considerable, the sporting world is not trustful, and it had been long in the habit of banking with the Occident. What had happened in the Occident was this.

On the morning of the day when the panic had occurred, a low, thick-set man with shaggy whiskers and a hand-bag had entered the Occident as if it belonged to him and demanded to see the president. The president's sanctum in those days was a space apart walled off by slabs of plate glass a quarter of an inch thick and screened from vulgar gaze by silk curtains in baby blue. The visitor announced that he had busi-

## Peggie Niven

ness of importance to both of them and requested Mr. Parlby as they entered the sanctum to give orders that they might be uninterrupted. When this order had been given and the door of the sanctum was closed, the visitor dropped his handbag in front of his chair and with one hand covered Parlby with a revolver in excellent condition and with the other produced a pint flask.

"I guess I got the drop on you, pard, all right: don't move 'cause I'm kind o' nervous in m' fingers and this here gun's got a blamed easy pull. Besides, this flask's full o' nitro-glyceri-i-ine an' I might drop it, an' you an' me an' the bank 'ud all make our bow in hell together. Sit down careful like, so's not to set off no electric buttons nor alarms; there's no knowin' how little 'ud make me lose my hold on the bottle. There now, that's real homelike and comfortable—reminds me o' mother. Suppose we talks."

Parlby was not a coward: he said so afterward: but he remembered that he was president of the bank and a citizen of value in the community, to say nothing of his being engaged at the moment to marry Miss Ansted of the San Francisco Ansteds. It was Parlby's steady practice in life to say nothing of private motives when public

## The Powers That Prey

motives could honestly be put forward; and the man certainly did look as if he meant business, and nitro-glyceri-i-ine is not to be despised.

"It's up to you to do the talking," said Parlby, putting up a creditable "front." "As far as I see, you've made an ass of yourself, whoever you are. All I've got to do is just to sit quiet; you can't get out of the bank; you couldn't win clear in the street if you did get out of the bank; you'll go to the Pen for this morning's joke. If there's anything to be said, it's you can say it."

"Sure! I'll say it fast enough. But you can come off your perch just the same. If I was leary of the Pen I shouldn't be here, an' you know it. I'll talk business with you if that's what you want; I'm on my uppers—see? Either I get the dough I want, or I croak; an' if you don't give me what I want we croak together. You're my last card, an' I'll play you, by God! What you say o' just sittin' still 's tommyrot; you make out a check payable to yourself for the sum I name, an' have the stuff brought in here an' stowed away in that bag, or you've seen your luck an' we'll both of us know what's what."

Parlby's visitor had been speaking with a fierce intentness that was convincing; Parlby

## Peggie Niven

thought him mad. Perhaps that was why he attempted to reason with him.

“Even if I got you the stuff and stowed it away in that bag, you couldn’t get away with it. You’d better talk sense, if you’ve got any. I’m not to be bullied in my own office, with forty clerks in call, armed as well as you. That’s the last word I have to say, and be damned to you.”

There was a battle of looks for a moment between the visitor and the president. It was the visitor who spoke—with extreme coolness.

“Mr. Parlby, you will take up that pen and write what I tell you. I take my chances of getting away, once the stuff is in my hands. You won’t give an alarm till I’ve got clear of the bank; I can throw a flask on the floor outside as well as here, an’ you’re much too careful of your skin to take any risks. You put up a bluff that I’m bughouse; well!—I’m not so bughouse but I can see you’re so scared of me you can’t sit in that chair without holdin’ on. You take up that pen an’ write what I tell you; an’ be quick about it; I’m kind o’ nervous, as I said, an’ this gun’s got a blamed easy pull an’ the outside o’ this flask’s kind o’ slippery.”

There was another battle of looks between the

## The Powers That Prey

two, at the end of which Parlby shrugged his shoulders and dropped his eyes—and searched for a pen.

. . . . .

It is said that the special officer of the bank and half a dozen clerks started in pursuit before the man with the hand-bag had fairly reached the pavement. There must have been two men with hand-bags; such coincidences happen. Possibly the coincidence was not accidental. At all events, they assailed *a* man with a hand-bag, and so quickly did the police patrol respond to the private alarm from Parlby's office that the man was not yet overpowered when the wagon arrived. When he was taken into custody he proved to be the wrong man, and the hand-bag proved to be the wrong hand-bag. It is possible that this mistake might not have been made if Parlby had personally superintended the chase, but he remained in his office: he was accurately acquainted with the properties of nitro-glycerine, which is quite as effective in a paved street as in a marble-floored building, and though he may have had no regard for his own life, he had other things than himself to think of. He thought of them.



## Peggie Niven

The next day there was found in an alleyway at the rear of the bank a suit of clothes, a revolver, and a flask, all identified by Parlby as belonging to the robber. The flask was found to contain sweet-oil. In the minds of some of Parlby's fellow citizens this discovery confirmed the notion that he had himself contrived the robbery; in the minds of others it served simply to make him ridiculous; in the minds of all it still further discredited him. The directors began to suspect they had been mistaken in their idea that Parlby was just the man they had long wanted for president. Certainly, as it afterward turned out, he had made a great blunder in parting with his real estate.

Peggie was never again heard to say that she would get even with Parlby. In the city of Blank there was little of anything that she was again heard to say: she soon closed out her interests there at a great profit and left the place, disappearing into the beyond where she still remains. It is just possible that she feels she *has* got even with Parlby, though it is questionable whether she would hold her hand if the chance should offer itself to get even with him again. All things considered, it is doubtful whether Peggie's ruling trait is gentleness.

## A DEAD ONE.

### I.

At tramp camps in the United States a favorite topic for discussion is the whereabouts of Barnard Carr. He has become for the hoboes a mysterious celebrity whose disappearance from the "road" they spend hours in trying to explain. Some think he is again "doing time" and will appear among them once more when released; others hold fast to the opinion that he has "croaked."

He was never a great celebrity in the sense that he had become noted for a mastery in some one branch of Under-World skill; but he was considered by the "perfesh" and the Powers That Rule a remarkably clever "all-round" man: Hoboes liked him because, as they put it, he was not "stuck on himself." It was his custom when in luck—and for ten years he seemed to be always in luck—to visit them at their hang-outs, and hoboes have always admired a crook who was

## A Dead One

sufficiently independent not to fear loss of caste on being seen in their company. They like such a man in about the same way that certain middle-class people like a titled aristocrat who receives them and visits them as equals. In the Under World tramps are men who have tried to earn titles and failed, or having earned them, have lost them; the successful criminal in the Under World is given a title irrespective of his wishes.

One of the present scribes met Carr, while he was at the top of his reputation, at a tramp camp in the minutely tramped state of Pennsylvania. It was at night, and a circle of men and boys were lounging about a great fire, with the dome of the stars for a tent and selected railway ties for camp-chairs and cots. On a tie apart, a tie of state, sat a well-dressed stranger, who was obviously the guest of the evening. Even a tenderfoot would have picked him out for a distinguished foreigner in Hoboland. His stylish garb, white hands, and polite manner were evidence enough that he was no ordinary traveler of the "road."

Newcomers at the camp were not left long in ignorance of the man's identity. The scribe had hardly taken a seat on one of the ties when a lad at his side nudged him, and said in an awestruck

## The Powers That Prey

whisper: "That's Carr, the great perfesh'nul." A heathen could not have directed attention to one of his deities with more reverence. The man seemed to be oblivious of the regard in which he was held by the camp. His eyes were fixed on the fire, and he spoke only occasionally. "How's Slim comin' up?" he asked once, turning to a man on his right, referring evidently to some absent roadster, and he commented on the weather and the like, but he had little to say about himself, and answered questions in monosyllables. When he got up to leave he dropped a ten-dollar bill on the tie, saying: "Wet 'er up on me, boys," and disappeared up the track.

The tramps commented on his career and personality after he had gone.

"How that bloke holds out!" one exclaimed. "If he's done a day in the Pen, he's done fifteen years. He's got the nerve; you can't see a sign o' weakenin' in him. Behanged 'f I can explain it."

"He'll go to pieces all of a sudden, some day," another declared. "You see 'f he don't. There's men like that: they don't crack nor bend, they bust. We'll see him here on the turf yet. I tell you, the bloke don't live that can take

## A Dead One

stretchers in the Pen the way Carr has, an' not bust. 'T ain't in human nature. 'Course he's holdin' out longer'n some; he's nervy, an' 's got good health; but I gamble coin he'll be hittin' the road after a while. He's a nice bloke right 'nough, but what I'm tellin' you 's the truth. A crook 's built like other folks, an' can't live on nerve forever."

"They say 't he's salted down a big pile for old age all the same," a westerner remarked. "'Frisco Blackie told me the other day that Carr was one o' the richest crooks in the country."

"Rich in your eye," sneered an old man from Chicago. "I'll bet Carr don't salt down anythin' from one year's end to the other. Crooks ain't bankers; what the devil's the matter with you? They blow their dough as fast as they get it; and right too; some lawyer or Front-Office stiff 'ud cop it out if they saved it up. I'll bet Carr ain't got over ten thousand put past, an' he'll spend all o' that prob'ly the next time he's pinched. I tell you it's the fly cops an' lawyers that get the crooks' coin. I ain't heard of a chief in a big city that didn't retire, as they call it, with his pockets full o' dough. Them's the blokes that does the savin'. 'T ain't the crook."

## The Powers That Prey

"What about Detroit Fraxy an' his blocks o' houses?" asked a kid.

"Detroit Fraxy—you make me tired! He'll lose 'em. He'll get in a hole some day, an' have to cough 'em up them houses. Look at Carr. He had one o' the best payin' gamblin' joints in 'Frisco four years ago: he had to deed it over to his lawyer fer chewin' the rag fer 'im in that murder scrape. It's all right 'bout crooks makin' dough, but it's holdin' of it that counts. God never yet made a crook that has stuck to the graft long, takin' chances an' stretchers, an' come out rich."

The hang-out broke up soon after this statement, and the men took trains in different directions.

During the following five years the scribe saw Carr twice, and heard of him once. On both occasions when he saw Carr, the man was apparently still in luck. He was dressed well, had money "to burn," was courted by his companions, and had no complaint to make beyond the statement that he felt that he was getting old.

"Had a year to do in Alabama not long ago," he explained at the second meeting, "and the Stir was so damp that my bones got wet. I don't



## A Dead One

mind when they give me steam-heat in my cell, but it rather uses me up otherwise. A fellow gets cranky, you know, after he's been shut up a good deal. As a kid, I didn't give a damn where they put me, but the guards get all my money now for things 't I think I got to have. That's about the only thing 't I keep a bank account for—to get priv'leges when the pinch comes. And do you know 't I don't feel comf'table any more in a large room. I ain't done such a hell of a lot o' time compared with some blokes, but I been livin' in cells off an' on for the las' sixteen years, an' I've got so used to 'em 't I always ask for a small room now when I go to a hotel. I have enough dough sometimes to pay for a whole suite, as they call it, but I wouldn't feel right in one. Give me a chair, a washstand, an' six feet to stretch out in, an' old Carr's happy as the rest of 'em. You see crooks sometimes 't ain't content till they got a whole house to themselves, but I guess they ain't done as much time as me. I tell you, pard, on the level—the Pen does change you. I'm sure 't I'd been a bigger man 'f I hadn't been cooped up so much. Didn't no more'n begin to grow than I got pinched, an' I ain't had a fightin' chance to grow since.”

## The Powers That Prey

“Your nerve ’s all right, isn’t it?” the scribe asked.

“It’s all right so far, but you never know when it’ll go back on you. I’m goin’ to try an’ put past a stake before long for old age. I’m bound to weaken after a while, an’ I ought to have a bank account to live on. ’Bout five years more ’ll see me settled down, I guess. I ought to plant a good swag by that time. ’Course it’ll be hard to chuck the business, but you got to cool down a little when you’re gettin’ shaky on your pins, an’ I’d rather like to die easy. God knows, I’ve lived hard!”

About two years after this conversation there appeared in a Western newspaper an account of Carr’s arrest for an offense committed on the Coast. It read thus: “Barnard Carr, alias Cincie Shorty, was arrested by the local police last night. The details of his crime have not yet come in, but there is no doubt in the minds of the police that Carr is the man wanted. The dispatch from ——— said that one of the local banks had been ‘taken in’ by a forged check calling for \$15,000, and the description of the alleged forger fits Carr exactly. The man has one of the longest police blotter records in this country. He has operated with one ‘graft’ and an-

## A Dead One

other in practically every State of the Union, and is not unknown in Mexico. On account of his neat appearance and unobtrusive manner, he is sometimes called 'The Gentleman Crook,' but he fraternizes with tramps as well as professional criminals. He is reported to take crime as seriously as an artist takes his art, and the neat 'jobs' that he has planned and done bear out the report. The sheriff states that he was welcomed by the other prisoners in the jail as a most distinguished personage. They gathered about him on his arrival, shook his hand, and offered him the best cell in the little prison. He is said to be very popular among criminals of all classes. If guilty of the crime for which he has been arrested, the probability is that he will be given a severe sentence. Carr has employed the best counsel in the city, and a telegram has been sent to the famous criminal lawyer Ames, in 'Frisco, so a hard fight may be expected, but ——— county has a poor opinion of forgers, and will probably back up its opinion with a very pugnacious prosecution. We will report the trial in detail; it will probably come up during the present term of court."

Six months later the Under World was notified that Barnard Carr had received eight years.

## II.

A short time ago the two scribes were taking a stroll in Lime Street, Liverpool. At night it is one of the most instructive promenades in England for a man who wishes to know things; and one can complete investigations that have been begun in "the main stem" of towns thousands of miles away. The four continents contribute to the life on the pavement as well as in the places of entertainment, and the passers-by and performers jabber in many tongues and dialects.

The scribes drifted into a "Free and Easy," where men and women sing songs, and then pass their hats and bonnets around for pennies and ha'pennies. It was a sordid little place with a smell in it that was composed of all smells of neglect, tobacco, and alcohol. Any one in the audience who had a voice and a song, or thought he had, might take the floor and put his opinion to the test of popularity. When volunteers are few, or backward about exposing their talent to gibes that are none too delicate, a master of cere-

## A Dead One

monies jumps up and says: "Who'll sing?—Come on now, be sharp! Somebody give us a wheezer or a clog"; and the piano-player strikes the ivories, and some one bursts forth into song.

On the evening in question there had been a lull in the proceedings, and to break it the master of ceremonies turned to a shabbily dressed little man sitting alone near the piano-player.

"Barnie, you little tramp, are you sober enough to give us a song?" he asked. "There's a good 'ouse to-night, an' you'll get a swag if you let 'er run right."

Barnie gave the "'ouse" the old jail song of the Boston burglar, which runs:

"I *was* brought up in Boston,  
a place you all know well;  
Brought up by honest parents,  
and now I've gone to hell;  
But my character was taken,  
I had to hit the trail;  
And his honor he shoved me into jail!"

The song was none of the best, and the man's voice was cracked, and the piano-player knew but little of the tune, but the audience cried "'ear, 'ear!" and clapped, and Barnie's hat was well

## The Powers That Prey

lined with copper. The collection finished, he took a seat near the scribes.

"I ain't much on the melojous howl," he said, with a significant grin, "but I can toss off a glass o' somethin' hot. I guess you fellows is Yanks, ain't you?"

He was told that he had guessed right.

"Thought so. What'll you take?—on me! Can't give you sham, but I'm good for anythin' in reason."

"You're a Yank yourself, aren't you?" one of the scribes queried, when the drinks had been brought.

"Well, that's as may be."

"Name's Carr, isn't it?"

The little vagrant gave both scribes a searching look.

"Who are you, blokes? D' I know you?"

One of the scribes reminded him of previous meetings in the "States."

"Well, I'll be hanged! Say, come down to my hang-out, will you? You've paid for this stuff; I'll get some booze an' a candle, an' we'll chew the rag. There's a lot I want to know about old times; too public here."

We left the "Free and Easy" and the smell,



## A Dead One

and Barnie led the way toward the docks. He insisted on purchasing some beer and a candle in a shop in the last street before turning into a maze of murky alleyways, and then guided us to a great barrel or hogshead, hidden away among broken boxes, discarded ship-timbers and assorted debris.

"'T ain't no parlor-car, pals," he explained, lighting the candle and setting it in a tin socket in the barrel, "but it fits me, an' that's all I want. Will you sit outside or come in? Can't all get in, that's sure."

The air was stagnant and warm to the touch, and even in the open the lungs labored. We declined the hospitality of the barrel and sat on some planks outside. It was some time before Barnie's talk turned naturally upon himself; he kept asking about this pal and that pal, how things were "coming up over home," who were still holding out in the "perfesh," who had gone under, which "coppers" were in power, which "stirs" were easy or hard, what good "touches" had been made lately, who were "settled" and who free, and about various other things connected with the life in which his imagination still dwelt with a certain pride. At last,

## The Powers That Prey

however, when the scribes had answered his queries as best they could, he said suddenly:

“ I s’pose you want to hear my rag-chewer now? ”

The scribes smiled and nodded. The little man’s shoulders twitched, he took a fresh piece of “ snipe ” from his pocket, bowed his head for a moment as if ashamed, looked up again, and began:

“ It’s none too nice to tell; but you blokes has known me when I was top of the heap and you will understand. ’Course I could ’a’ croaked myself, an’ the whole thing ’ud ’a’ been off, but the fact is I didn’t have even nerve enough for that. That last stretcher on the Coast dreened me out. They used me hard, that’s where it is, an’ I didn’t make any good time either. I basted a guard for callin’ me a liar, an’ the warden didn’t remember to forgit it. They tucked me away in the dungeon ten times just for luck like. I had a few thousand when they turned me loose, but I spent ’em travelin’. I thought ’t I’d brace up, p’r’aps, ’f I got a change, so I came over here, an’ for a while I drifted all over the shop. If my dough ’ud ’a’ held out I’d be on the mooch yet, I guess. I only had twenty pounds when I got

## A Dead One

back to London, but my nerve was no good, an' I tried for a job on the level, but 't wasn't no use. A bloke that's used up for swipin' ain't up to no kind o' work, good or bad. 'Course I could 'a' turned fly cop. A Yank copper in London offered me good money 'f I'd work for him, but I didn't want to be a mouthpiece, an' that's what I'd 'a' been 'f I'd taken the job. A fellow that the push has treated square is a dirty sucker to go an' live on what he knows after he gets used up. If I had my way, I'd shoot every son of a cur of a mouthpiece. Well, I tried gamblin' for a bit, but I couldn't win nothin'; a man that's down on 'is luck, shouldn't touch the bones; luck brings luck, an' bad luck brings bad: you take my tip. I came here to Liverpool with some London gamblers, but I was out of it here too an' got flat on my uppers. I could 'a' raised some dough, I guess, 'f I'd telegraphed home; my rep was good for a thousand or two, an' the boys 'ud 'a' sent it over prob'ly; but a bloke don't like to go home after he knows 't his nerve's gone. Crooks is a charitable lot right enough, an' stand by a fellow when 'e's just hard hit, but they're queer 's the devil when they run up against a dead one. I know how 't is, 'cause dead ones have

## The Powers That Prey

tackled me when I was on my legs, an' I hated to look at 'em. You feel the way you do when you're in an insane asylum. 'Course a dead one ain't bughouse or anythin' like that, but when you look at him you keep thinkin' that p'r'aps it'll be your turn next, an' you get shivery like. 'T ain't nice in any push, respectable or otherwise, to rubber at a bloke that's gone to pieces, an' I was too proud to let any push rubber at me. I knew 't I couldn't steal worth a damn 'f I went back—any dead one knows that when he's really lost his grip—an' I wasn't goin' to have the push an' the coppers over there belly-achin' around about Carr bein' laid on the shelf. The coppers in the States are the very devil on a dead one. They keep tryin' to make him cough up what he knows, an' if he don't cough, they're liable as not to pinch him for a vag. W'y, I've seen 'em actually railroad a dead one to the Pen on a fake charge jus' 'cause he wouldn't help 'em get wise. I ain't stuck on England or the coppers here, but the coppers can't cut up with a bloke here the way they do in the States. 'Course they hammer me every now an' then when they take me to the station-house, but that's just a habit they've got into. You see the people over here won't

## A Dead One

let 'em do any hammerin' in the streets, an' as they've got to get exercise somehow, they do the hammerin' in the station-house. They ain't so wise as our coppers, but they ain't so crooked either. I'd 'a' been dead long before I was 'f I'd been an English crook. A bloke's got to take his med'cine over here if they catch him, an' it's the med'cine that kills. 'Course some holds out longer'n I did, but twenty-four years inside ain't a bad record, an' that's the time I spent in the Pen. They've had me shut up nearly half my life.

"If I'd stayed in the States I s'pose I'd be livin' with the hoboes now. They ain't bad blokes to pal with, but 't 'ud hurt to have to drop down into their push. 'Course that's what the dead ones do over there—go trampin'—but I ain't sorry 't I'm not with 'em; I don't know how to beg as much as a piece o' bread. After I've sung a song or done a bit of a double-shuffle, I don't mind passin' my hat around in the pub, but I get ashamed when I ask for somethin' outright. You wouldn't think that a bloke that's been mixed up in as much crooked work as I have 'ud be that way, but I'm givin' it to you straight. If I should go to a back door to-morrow mornin'

## The Powers That Prey

an' ask for a poke-out, I'd blush an' stutter like a bashful kid.

"I tried polishin' shoes for a while, but the 'shines' guyed me so 't I quit. I wasn't no good at it anyhow. All I can do is to float around, sing a song when people 'll listen to me, an' hold down this old barrel. This place 's been my hang-out for nearly a year now. I use to sleep in an old cellar, but I had to mooch last flittin' day, as they call it. When they move over here they say they flit.

"Sometimes I think I'd like to go back home, but 'course I'll never get there. When I'm sober I try to make out 't I'm English, but I guess the blokes is next. The other day I got pretty jagged, an' forgot all about bein' English. Some jays over in a pub 't I go to was runnin' down the States, an' I called 'em down; I told 'em 't we could stick their bloody little island in one corner of our country and 't 'ud take Stanley twenty years to find it. 'Course they basted me—I always get it in the neck when I'm jagged—but I didn't mind. After you're dead, a big quiet like comes on you an' you don't care what happens.

"It 'ud be nice to see some o' the boys again, an' I'd rather like to croak on the other side, but



## A Dead One

I don't think about such things much. They got to bury me wherever I croak. Some o' the girls up in Lime Street took up a collection for a pal 't I had that croaked, an' buried him in style, but I told 'em they'd better 'a' given a big feed to his friends. I used to be a great bloke for style, but style don't cut no ice with me any more. 'Course 't ain't nice to wind up in a barrel the way I have, but you can't keep on top forever, an' I'm glad enough sometimes 't I don't have to worry 'bout my reputation any more. You get just as tired out tryin' to hold your posish in the crook world as you do with the millionaires. There ain't a fly crook livin' that don't worry 'bout droppin' down into a low class. I don't have them worries, an' it's a bigger relief 'n you'd think. There ain't no place for me to drop to—I've reached 'de limit.'

"If the blokes over here knew me an' pointed me out to strangers, 'course I'd feel my tumble worse 'n I do, but nobody bothers me. You're the first blokes I've talked to this way since I struck Liverpool. I don't mind 'f you tell the blokes at home about me. It 'ud 'a' hurt a little couple o' years ago 'cause I had some hope then, but it don't matter now; nothing matters—see?

## The Powers That Prey

No one can do anythin' for me. A city missionary got me round to his shop a few months ago an' tried to brace me up, but I was square. 'You're all right, boss,' I said to him, 'but you can't help me 'cause I'm a dead one.' He didn't understand what 'dead one' meant, an' I tried to explain, but he couldn't catch on, an' kep' talkin' away 'bout religion. I give it to him straight. 'Religion, boss,' I told him, 'is for them that cares. I don't care. I'm dreened out. You can lock me up, or do what you please—'t won't change me a bit. My clock 's run down.' 'Course there's them that laughs 'bout a bloke losin' his grip an' don't believe in it, but they're foolish. The time was when I wasn't leary of holdin' up an express train single-handed; it's all I can do now to scrape up nerve enough to kill the fleas in this barrel. Some people calls the disease the shivers, an' others calls it the blind eye. I calls it the staggers. You stagger in front of everythin' that it needs grit to do. Some day I'll stagger into a hole, an' the barkeeps won't have any more Barnie to baste, an' the girls won't have to chip in an' help pay for my song. But, I've had my fling in my day, men, an' don't you forgit it," and for an instant his eyes snapped, and he held his head high.

THE END





**RETURN CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT**  
**TO → 202 Main Library**

LOAN PERIOD 1 <b>HOME USE</b>	2	3
4	5	6

**ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS**

Renewals and Recharges may be made 4 days prior to the due date.

Books may be Renewed by calling 642-3405

**DUE AS STAMPED BELOW**

JUN 30 1995

MAY 01 1998

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY  
BERKELEY, CA 94720

YB 07683

GENERAL LIBRARY - U.C. BERKELEY



8000914747

Willard

103696

HV6233

.W5



